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TYPES OF
CELTIC LIFE AND ART.

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CELTIC LIFE AND ART

BY

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This Little Volume is

DEDICATED TO ALL IRISHMEN

At Home and Abroad.

CONTENTS.

PREFACE ... ... i.

INTRODUCTION ... ... iii.

Section 1.—The Three Free Tribes. 2.—The Religion of the Ancient Irish. 3,—The Druids. 4.—An Ancient Mode of Writing. 5.—Ancient Forts and Dwelling Places. 6.—Ecclesiastical Architecture. 7.—The Celtic Schools and their Art.

CHAPTER. PAGE.

I.—The Celtic Race 1

II.—Celtic Types in Wales 11

III.—Ancient Codes of Honour 19

IV.—The Celtic Social System 29

V.—Ancient Irish Society—The Chief .. 39

VI.—The Fair Sex of Ancient Erin 52

VII.—The Ancient Irish Judge 62

VIII.—The Irish Bard 73

IX.—The Bardic Order 79

X.—The Celt and the Norman—The Fusion of the Nations 92

XI.—Celtic Monuments—The Cromlech .. 102

XII.—Irish Tombs and Towers 111

XIII.—Tara's Halls 121

XIV.—An Ancient Celtic Settlement 128

CELTIC TYPES OF LIFE AND ART.

PREFACE.

THIS is not in any sense a learned treatise, but merely a simple account of some of the types of life and art that have been found from time to time in Ireland. The writer would, therefore, make three requests of his readers. First, that they would bear in mind that subjects of controversy in religion and politics have been designedly avoided, and that only matters of common interest to all creeds and classes have been discussed in these pages; secondly, that they will pardon the many omissions, which must, of necessity, appear in a work of this nature, which professes only to give certain specimens, and not an exhaustive, dry-as-dust history of all the types that have existed from the most ancient times in this land; and, thirdly, that any of colossal learning, into whose hands this book may fall, will remember the difficulties of the task the writer set before him, and sympathise with an attempt, no matter how crude, to give a picture of the life and surroundings of the historic, but ancient inhabitants of the Green Isle. As

references to the various authorities would only serve to overload a popular work like the present, they have been omitted, except in the most important cases; but no pains have been spared to secure as much accuracy as was possible under conditions where fancy always embroidered, if it did not contribute, the facts. In conclusion, the writer hopes that this publication of studies and observations of Irish life will induce others to study and observe for themselves Celtic types, wherever they may be found.

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INTRODUCTION.

Section 1.—The Three Free Tribes.

The history of Ireland from the remotest times is the record of a country that was never permitted to live at peace with itself. The *Senchus Mor* speaks of three noble or free families—Ulidians, Feine of Tara, and Erna (I. 80); or Ulidians, Goidels of Tara and Erna (I. 70), between whom the land was divided. The Ulidians (Ulaid) are the Ultonians, the Pictish race of Ollam Fodla; the Erna are the Ivernians of Munster, and the Goidels are the Celtic conquerors, who are called both Galeoin and Feine. The work of Ptolemy, the geographer, which mentions several Irish names of places, gives an equivalent in Greek for Ulidians, and mentions a river Iernos, identified with the River Maine in Kerry, flowing through the territory of the Ivernioi, or Erna.* The Ulidians, who gave their name to *Ul*-ster, as the Lagin (lleyn), or spearmen mercenaries, who restored Labraid, the exile, to his throne, gave their name to *Lein*ster, and Mumhan, large, gave its name to *Mun*ster, and Conn left his mark on *Conn*aught, seem to have been forced northwards by the Milesians, who compelled them to

* Professor Rhy's *Studies in Early Irish History*, p. 21.

abandon Tara, and to entrench themselves in their great rath at Emania, better known as Navan (*N* representing the article in Irish) fort. Within that ancient palace, the site of which is marked by a circular rampart and fosse, enclosing some eleven acres, about a mile and a half to the west of Armagh, was a house called Craedhruadh (*Creeveroe*), where the Red Branch Knights had their quarters. Of these knights, Conchobar mc Nessa and his friend, Cuchullin, were the most famous. From Conall, his son, were descended the Dal nAraide, *i.e.*, the tribe of Araide, generally known as Dalaradians, whose territory in Down extended northwards to Mount Slemish, (Mount Mis) where it met the lands of Dal-riada, which were occupied by Scots, whom Bede describes as "going forth from Hibernia, under the leadership of Reuda, and securing for themselves, either by friendly or hostile measures, settlements among the Picts, which they occupy to this day. From the name of their leader, they are called Dalreudini; for Dal, in their language, signifies a part."

It is a remarkable thing that the principal tribes that divided Scotland between themselves in that and the succeeding ages, the Picts and Scots, should be then found contesting, inch by inch, the counties of Antrim and Down; the former occupying the southern districts, and the latter the northern. The Scots of the Irish Dalriada, as Bede tells us, founded a second Dalriada in Argyleshire, which gradually developed

into the ruling power of Scotland, as the Picts were subdued. The relations of the Picts and Scots in Ireland and Scotland do not seem, however, to have been always hostile. Bede, in his interesting account of the origin of the matriarchy of the Picts, tells us, that the Picts on landing in Ireland requested the Scots to give them both land and wives. The Scots, however, refused to part with their territory, politely suggesting that there would be ample room for the Picts in Britain, but they gave them wives on the condition that, if ever any dispute should arise in regard to the succession, they should select their king from the *female* royal line.

The Pictish settlement in Dalaradia was eventually destroyed by the three Collas, who were Celtic, or Goidelic, descendants of Erem, or Erimon (gen. case). The year A.D. 332 saw the destruction of the great Navan fort. A common disaster seems then to have drawn together the Picts and Scots, as all invaders from Ireland came to be called in Britain; for in 360 we find Roman Britain attacked by Picts from the North and Scots from Ireland. And a century or more later the Picts of Galloway, who had been converted to Christianity by Ninian, who built a stone church at Whitern called Candida Casa, or White House, joined with the Scots settlers in Argyle in a barbarous raid upon the coasts of Ireland, which called forth an indignant protest from S. Patrick in his Letter to their leader Coroticus—one of the Saint's genuine works.

Again, in 560, we hear of Brude, the King of the Picts, whose seat was Craig Patrick, in Inverness, inflicting a terrible defeat on the Scottish Colony in Dalaradia. Here another Irish saint, in the person of S. Columba, came to the rescue. He was a Scot, but while at Bangor, in Co. Down, had devoted himself, with the assistance of SS. Comgall and Canice, who were Picts, to teach the Picts of Dalaradia. In 563, with twelve companions, he rowed away from Ireland in a small wicker-work boat, covered with hide, well known on the west coast as a currach or coracle, believing that he would never see the shores of his beloved Erin again. For that was his punishment. At last he landed in the isle of Iona, near Oban. Here he and his companions remained for a time until they were ready for their mission to Brude. Then they went to Craig Patrick, and with but little difficulty persuaded "the powerful King of the Pictish nation" to become a Christian. This was the beginning of the Irish mission to the Picts.

We come now to the second great family in Ireland, the Feine of Tara, a term which, according to Professor Atkinson, means *the conquering race.* These Goidels or Celts were, according to the same authority, Teutonic invaders. And Professor Rhys declares that there is evidence "of a certain amount of contact, social and political, between the Celts and Britons on the Continent." M. de Jubainville gives instances of words such as Gothic *reiks* "a prince," and Mod.

Ger. *geissel*, "a hostage," which may have been derived from or by the Celts before they came to these islands. It is, therefore, more probable that the Celts came from northern rather than from southern Europe to our shores. This theory overthrows the idea that these Milesian settlers were descended from one Miled or soldier of Spain. The name Goidel, which is not to be confounded with Irish *gaill*, "foreigner," as in Fingall (white stranger), and Baldoyle (town of Dougall or dark stranger) probably means warrior, and is the same as the Latin *Miles*, which was shortened in Irish into Mil. We shall see, as we proceed, that "Warriors" was a most suitable name for these invaders of Erin. Féine or Féni was the Celtic speech. Cormac's glossary describes one of the three sages who compiled the *Senchus Mor* as *Sui berla Feine*, or learned in the language of the Feine.

The third great family of the Senchus Mor, the Erna, were probably the Ivernian inhabitants, who gave their name, Erin, to the island in the various forms, Ivera, Ivvera, Iverna, Eriu, Erin. These were driven westward by the Celts, and their descendants even to our day bear a strong resemblance in complexion, features, and disposition to the Spanish inhabitants of the Pyrenees, who were called Iberi as the Irish were by Columbanus. Dark, handsome faces, tall, slight figures, lethargic habits, especially the last, are the distinguishing marks of both peoples. This was

remarked to the writer by a friend who had come to Ireland after spending some time in the Pyrenees, and who was particularly struck by the refined and pleasant manners of the Irish, their sympathy, courtesy, and generosity. But it is not a rare thing for the tourist in Kerry to find that his driver is enjoying the sleep of the just, even with the reins in his hands. The similarity between these peasantry cannot be altogether explained as due to the wrecking of the Spanish vessels of the Armada on the west coast. And the fair-haired Kerryman was not quite accurate when he described his dark-visaged neighbours as "some of the Spaniards who were drowned in the Armada!" The Spanish appearance of the houses and people of Dingle may be the result of a Spanish settlement there in former days for fishing purposes; but the trading connections between Ireland and Spain go back to very early times.

Owen More, better known as Mog Muadhat, the Munster rival of Conn of the Hundred Battles, whose half of Ireland was called Leth Moga, Conn's being Leth Cuinn, obtained his wife Beara, after whom he called a district Beerhaven, and many of his soldiers from the King of Spain. See also "Book of Leinster" 319b, where we find mention of the courtship of Momera (tochmarc Momera), another Spanish princess. Tacitus, who refers to the trade of Ireland with the Roman Empire, describes Ireland as lying midway between Spain and Britain; and Orosius, a

Spanish historian of the 5th century, mentions a lighthouse at Brigantia, in the north-west of Spain, which was built to keep watch on Britain. From this we may infer that pirates were attracted from Britain by the vessels that traded between the west of Ireland and Spain. Galway city itself has also many Spanish features in its arched gateways and courts; and in its rude sculpture and quaint architecture has reminded more than one visitor of the Moorish cities of Granada and Valencia, which latter gave its name to the beautiful island off the Kerry coast called by the Irish people Darrery (dairbhre), from its oaks and the ancient abode of the famous Druid magician Mog Ruith (Servant of the Wheel), while the fishing quarter known as the Claddagh is distinctly Spanish with its own peculiar laws and its own "king." Some years ago the writer enquired after the health of his majesty of the fishing fleet, but was informed by an intelligent fisherman that he was very aged and had retired to the Union. The "Tribes" who settled here in the 13th century devoted themselves to commerce and trade chiefly with Spain. The Lynch, who figures so tragically like another Brutus, in the annals of the City, traded largely with that country; and the story is that it was to avenge the murder of a Spanish merchant that he executed his own son. There are also many Celtic words in the Basque language; which fact inspired many, Professor Rhys amongst them, to attempt to establish an affinity

between the Basque and the ancient languages of Ireland, Celtic and Pictish. It is also a remarkable fact that the Breton fishermen, who frequently visit the Kerry waters, are able to make themselves understood to the Irish-speaking folk whose dialect of Irish is very different from that spoken in Connaught, and that the Welsh sailors can converse with the inhabitants of the Breton ports. This shows that we have Celtic relations in France as well as Iberian relatives in Spain.

But the strangest connection between the West of Ireland and Northern Spain is shown by the plants that are peculiar to both districts. *Cybele Hibernica* mentions several members of the Cantabrian groups in Kerry, among them the *Saxifraga Umbrosa*, the common London Pride, the *Saxifraga Geum*, the *Saxifraga Hirsuta*, the *Arbutus Unedo*, and the *Pinguicula Grandiflora*. The *Arbutus Unedo* is found in great profusion at Killarney, but less frequently in the neighbourhood of Glengarriff; while the *Pinguicula Grandiflora* grows even more luxuriantly in Kerry than in the Pyrenees. These facts suggest, at least, that similar atmospheric conditions prevail in both places, for it is well known that environment enters largely into the making of both plants and men; and that the congenial nature of their surroundings is more or less the cause of the survival of the Iberian type of man and plant in Kerry.

The West of Ireland has so many attractions in its magnificent sea coast, mountains, and glens that it is possible that the man who observed, that when he had got as far to the West as he could, he understood why the wise men came from the East, would have made an exception in its favour.

From what we have seen of these three noble families of the *Senchus Mor*, we can form a tolerably distinct picture of the island divided between Ivernians, Celts, and Ulidians, the Celts gradually gaining the upper hand, though unable to completely reduce Ulidians or Ivernians, or banish them from their mountain fastnesses; while behind the scenes move the primitive inhabitants, the Fir-sidhe (the men of the hills) and the Beann-sidhe (Banshees, or women of the hills), to trouble their conquerors with their magic and their spells. In such a condition of things there could be no peace, and much of the racial hatred found at the present day in Ireland goes back to the ancient struggles, both for existence and supremacy in the island, the balance of power in which seems to have been always held by three distinct powers—Ulidians, Celts, and Ivernians, in the times alluded to in the *Senchus Mor*; Celts, Danes, Normans, under the Plantagenet Kings or Lords of Ireland; and towards the end of the 14th century by "Wild Irish, our enemies; Irish rebels; and obedient English," as they were described by Richard II. A three-cornered fight seems to have

been the fate of Erin, which was most unlucky in not having been invaded by the Romans, the only power which could have welded these heterogeneous elements into one great nation, and taught them, as they did the British, the difference between a battle and a campaign.

Section 2.—The Religion of the Ancient Irish.

There can be no doubt that these primitive peoples had some form of religion. What it was we are left to infer from the survival of apparently early superstitions, which the Celt would never willingly let die, in connection with wells, sacred trees, and pillar stones. The most conspicuous object of worship in those early days was the great pillar idol called Crom or Cenn Cruach, which stood in a large plain, Mag Slecht, or the plain of Adoration or Slaughter, near Ballymagawran, in the county of Cavan. It was plated with gold and surrounded by twelve smaller stones, which are supposed by some to represent the signs of the Zodiac. In the *Vita Tertia* of S. Patrick it is said that Laoghaire used to worship there, and that the Saint visited the place and struck down the idol with his staff. The cult of Crom Cruaich seems,

however, to have been out of fashion for some time previous, and we can hardly believe that the Celts of the 5th century offered human sacrifices to this idol, and must consider the notice of such practices in connection with this idol found in the "Book of Leinster":

> "Milk and corn
> They used to ask of him urgently,
> In return for a third of their offspring;
> Great was the horror and the wailing there."

as referring back to very early times. For Cormac Mac Art, who was King of Ireland at the beginning of the second century, and who had learned something of Christianity in his warlike expeditions to Britain, not only left orders that his body should not be buried in Celtic fashion with his pagan ancestors in Brug-na-Boyne, but on the other side of the river at Ross-na-ree, the wood of the kings, where an ancient burial place has been recently discovered on Mr. Osborne's estate, but is also said to have defied ancient Crom in words like these of Sir Samuel Ferguson:

> "Crom-Cruach and his sub-gods twelve,"
> Said Cormac, "are but carven treen;
> The axe that made them, haft or helve,
> Had worthier of our worship been.
>
> But He who made the tree to grow,
> And hid in earth the iron-stone,
> And made the man with mind to know
> The axe's use, is God alone."

But it is quite possible that some lingering belief in a spirit inhabiting this stone, such as Lieutenant Conder

found among the Arabs of Palestine, required to be exorcised by the crozier, or "bachall" of the Saint.

The worship of trees seems also to have been prevalent from the use of the word *bile*, or sacred tree, which occurs in local names, such as Moville and Rathvilly. Under these trees the May fires may have been kindled. For *The Four Masters* mention a place called Bile-teineadh (Billa-tinne), the sacred tree of the fire, identified by O'Donovan with Coill-a'-bhile, the wood of the sacred tree, now Billywood, near Moynalty, in Meath. The "Book of Leinster" mentions five of these trees—the Eo Rossa, a yew tree; the Eo Mugna, an oak; the Bilé Dathi, the Bilé Tortain and the Cræb Uisnig, ash-trees, all of which were destroyed in the time of the sons of Aedh Slaine in the seventh century. Eo Mugna was a tree of extraordinary size and fertility according to the poet Ninnine, who described its top as being "as broad as a plain," and declared that it bore fruit three times a year. Eo Rossa, which stood in county Monaghan, was bestowed by S. Molaisse on the saints of Ireland; and in the Life of S. Molling, we read that he employed an architect, Goban Saer, who is said to have erected one of the famous Round Towers to carve an oratory out of the portion which fell to his lot, but that the Saint was not very happy in it. In the Life of S. Berach, also in the "Book of Leinster," we read of a Druid declining a contest with Berach, unless it would be held under a certain tree, tenanted, as he thought,

by a demon friendly to himself. Indeed every tribe seems to have its own sacred tree under which its chief was elected. One of the greatest triumphs for one tribe to achieve over another was to cut down its tree. The *Four Masters*, under 981, describe the uprooting of the sacred tree of the O'Briens, the *bile* of Magh-adhar in Clare, by Malachy the Ard-ri. And in 1111 the Ulidians cut down the sacred trees of the O'Neills at Tullahogue, for which deed of sacrilege they had to pay a heavy fine or eric. Some of these trees which remain are called *Bell* trees, a corruption of *bile*.

The people also worshipped the spirit of the wells, water being considered sacred in times when it was so essential to life. Tirechan in the Book of Armagh relates that S. Patrick came to a well called Slan, which the Druids worshipped as divine; and Adamnan in his Life of S. Columba tells us that saint discovered the worship of a certain well among the Picts, who, "seduced by the devil, paid divine honour to the fountain." In Christian times the earliest churches and oratories, for the purpose of Baptism and because of the ancient associations, which were always respected, were built in the neighbourhood of these wells, many of which are even now visited by pilgrims and penitents on the day of the patron saint, and are possessed, in many cases, of medicinal properties. Among the best known are the wells of SS. Doulough, Canice, and Declan. On a certain day in August the

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peasantry used to visit the well in front of Slane Castle, and after hanging out their rags on the grass to propitiate the spirit of the waters, would then resort to the ancient stone of the apostle near the hermitage of S. Erc. Similar devotions are held on July 24 at the well and stone of S. Declan at Ardmore, near Waterford. The frequency with which the word tobar (well) occurs in the names of townlands and towns, *e.g.*, Tobercurry and Tipperary, testifies to the early veneration for wells. There is, moreover, a legend that Boan, a beautiful woman, who was also a magician, insisted on seeing the waters of a well, the sight of which was forbidden to mortal eyes, and that the well in its wrath rushed upon her in a torrent which still flows as the Boyne to the sea.

The principal object of worship, however, seems to have been the Sun; many of the rites connected with it being preserved to our own times. The bon-fires kindled in many places on St. John's Eve are the survival of the ancient fires kindled in the sun-worship, and known as Beltane* or Druidic fires of the first of May, originally instituted by Tuathal, King of Ireland, in the first century at Usnagh, in Westmeath, and described in Cormac's Glossary as "two goodly fires which the Druids were used to make, with great incantations on them, and they used to bring the cattle between them against the diseases of each year."

* This word is explained in Cormac's Glossory as Bil-tene, goodly fire; by some as equivalent to Baals fire; by others as *La Beal-tine*, the day of the passage of the fire.

It was thus a passing through fire as the best derivation of the word suggests. Keating tells us that the custom of kindling "two fires in honour of the pagan God" was universal. There are souvenirs of these fires in the endings *teine* or *tinny*, "fire," as in Kiltinny and *sollus* "light," as in Ardsollus or hill of light in Clare. Samhuin, or the November feast, was originally instituted by the same monarch at Tlachtga, now the Hill of Ward, near Athboy. On this day, the *Feis*, or Convention of Tara, was also held. And on the first of November, as Dr. Joyce remarks, "the people practise many observances which are undoubted relics of ancient pagan ceremonials."* S. Patrick in his *Confession* alludes to sun-worship in the passage:—"All that worship it, unhappy beings, shall assuredly be punished; whereas we who believe in and adore the true Sun, Jesus Christ, shall never perish." In the same work the Saint tells us that when he was one day calling Helias (Elias or Eli, my God), the Sun (Helios) rose up in all its splendour. Professor Bury writes:—"If there was any one divinity who was revered and worshipped thoughout the land it was probably the Sun." It is not improbable that the great pillars of Stonehenge, which the stone circle at Baltonny, near Raphoe, resembles on a smaller scale, were once connected with the worship of the Sun. But it is to be inferred from the ancient Hymn

* A capitular of Charlemagne condemned similar solstice fires in the Bavarian highlands as a remnant of paganism.

of S. Patrick that all the elements invoked in it, the light of the sun, the brightness of the moon, the speed of the lightning, the swiftness of the wind, the depth of the sea, the stability of the earth, and firmness of the rock were held in veneration by the ancient Celt, who possibly felt in some dim way the presence of a mysterious Power in and behind the waters, winds, hills, and rocks :—

> "*Thus* the feeble hands and helpless,
> Groping blindly in the darkness,
> *Touched* God's right hand in that darkness,
> And *were* lifted up and strengthened."

Other divinities play a part in Celtic mythology and folk-lore, such as Badb, the goddess of war; Nuadu, a sea divinity; and Brigit, a goddess with a fire ritual, whose place was afterwards taken in the hearts of the people by the Irish S. Brigid of Kildare, who also had a fire, which is said to have been never allowed to go out. But the great mass of people seemed to have no religion beyond a vague fear of the Earth-Gods and the fairies, the Fir-Sidhe and Bean-Sidhe, or Banshees. It will be remembered that the daughters of Laogaire, Ethne and Fedelm, in Tirechan's story ("Book of Armagh"), when they saw S. Patrick and his companions seated at the well, thought there was something uncanny about them, and that they were men of the *Sidhe*, or Gods of the Earth or apparitions. The word *Sidhe* which may come, as Todd shows, either from the Lat. *Sedes*, habitation or the Celtic *Side*, a blast of wind, has an unpleasant creepy

feeling about it. The men of the *Sidhe* are supposed to have been the Tuatha de Danaan, the people of the Goddess Danaan, who tried in vain to prevent the Milesians from landing in Ireland by throwing magical spells upon the seas and raising storms. In an old Irish book, the "History of the Cemeteries," Cormac Mac Art is said to have been killed by the *Siabhra*, i.e., the Tuatha de Danaans, for they were called "Siabhras." Two of these *Sidhs* are celebrated places. Sidh Boov, occupied by Bove Derg, was on the Portumna shore of Lough Derg, one of the most beautiful and poetic lakes in Ireland; while the far-famed Rock of Cashel, the *Caisel-na-Rig*, or "stone fort of the kings," which was built in the days of S. Patrick by Corc McLugdach, previously rejoiced in the name Sidh-dhruim [Sheerim], or fairy ridge. The Irish family name Shean or Shane may have some connection with the home of the fairies.

Some of the fairy queens who presided over these abodes, and who now go by the vulgar name of *Banshees*, were quite celebrated persons in their own day and way. *Cleena* was the potent queen of the fairies of South Munster. Her name is well known in the neighbourhood of Skibbereen, where she has her special wave, *Tonn-cleena*, and her special rock, *Carrig-cleena*. But north Munster was under the spell of a charming fairy called Eevil or "the Beautiful One," who resided near Killaloe in Crageevil, or Eevils' rock, now called Craglea, grey rock. She

appeared, it is said, to two of the Dalcassian heroes before the battle of Clontarf, even to Dunlang O'Hartigan, a companion of Murchadh, Brian's son, and to Brian himself, warning both of the danger in their path.

The Celtic peoples were nothing if not superstitious. Alive to all kinds of presentiments and "starry influences," which the more obtuse Saxon ignores, their principal source of knowledge is tradition, and their chief amusement to sit round the fire at night and tell and hear ghost stories. The Cornishmen are not unlike their Irish brethren in this respect. The Celts *feel* ghosts and hideous spectres in thorn bushes, especially where they grow in clusters, in lonely glens, solitary lakes*, weird ridges, coffin-shaped wells. There is a cluster of thorn bushes on one of the private avenues in Kinnitty which only a Saxon would pass with impunity after dark. There is another solitary thorn bush in the middle of the road that runs between Seirkeiran, the ancient residence of S. Keiran, and Leap Castle, one of the most interesting and historical fortresses in Ireland, which the Celt is particular to pass on his right hand. The story is that a Saxon driver taking the wrong side overturned his coach and broke his leg. The Irish were also in constant fear of an unpleasant Goblin called Pooka, Shakespeare's Puck, who has given his name to

* *e.g.* The names Dullowbush or phantom bush; Gillagancan, the headless man's lake; Drumarraght, the ridge of the ghost; Drumahaire, the ridge of the air-demons, &c.

Poolaphuca in Wicklow, and to Boheraphuca, an uncanny lane that strikes at right angles the truly magnificent mountain road that runs from Kinnitty to Roscrea, with the picturesque hills of the Slieve Bloom on one hand and the verdant plains and hills of Ely O'Carroll on the other. The writer has ridden past the place at all hours, but has never seen anything so far of the Pooka. Should the number of Irish names of places which the word Devil helps to form, such as "The Devil's Bit," "The Devils' Glen," "The Devil's Punchbowl," suggest to the Saxon stranger that the Irish were addicted to Devil worship, we have only to remind him of the jarvey's classic retort to the Cockney's statement that his Satanic Majesty seemed to be the principal landlord in Ireland: "Aye, indeed, but he is an absentee, and mostly lives in London." But it does seem a gruesome thing on the part of the Irish to hand over dismal lakes like Lougandoul, and deserted residences like Deune Castle to the keeping of such an one.

S. Patrick is said to have freed the country from dragons and demons when he visited Croagh Patrick, and banished the demons to Lugnademon, but both species seem to survive and flourish, at any rate, in Irish topography. For we have a hill of the serpents in Knocknabeast, a lake infested by some kind of obnoxious dragon, the terror of prehistoric bathers, in Loughnapiast, and a fort in the possession of some unsavoury reptiles in Lisnapaste.

Section 3.—The Druids.

From this general account of the superstitious fears of the Celts in Ireland, we return to the Druids, by whose hands the priestly rites, whatever they may have been, were performed, and of whose tenets and practices Cæsar, who also refers to the "piled up mounds or earthen *tumuli* in their sacred places," gives an invaluable account in the sixth book of his commentary *De Bello Gallico*. As the Druid organisation seems to have been universal among the Celtic peoples of Britain, Ireland, and Gaul, Cæsar's description gives a fairly accurate idea of the system that prevailed in Ireland. Professor Rhys, in his *Studies* [p. 35], however, draws attention to one mistake of that Roman soldier and historian which he corrects in a way that is flattering to Irish pride. Cæsar's remark was to the effect that the order of the Druids (B.C. VI. 13) originated in Britain and passed over into Gaul, and that those who wished to study the system frequently went to Britain. Professor Rhys says, "he should, when speaking of the seat of druidic learning, not have named Britain alone, but Erin likewise or rather, perhaps, Erin first and foremost."

These Druids seem to have been not only most influential in Church and State, but also to have been highly educated persons. According to Cæsar, they instructed the youth in the motions of the stars, the

greatness of the world, natural science or botany, and the power and authority of the immortal Gods. They committed to memory a great number of verses, and used Greek characters for ordinary matters of life. They led a life of lettered ease, immune from taxation and military service, belonged to the better classes, and were well dressed and highly respected. Strabo divides the order into three classes, the Druids, who were engaged in natural science and moral philosophy; the Vates, who performed the sacrifices; the Bards, who were the composers and singers of hymns and songs.

Lucan, the unhappy Roman poet and rival of Nero, gives this interesting description of the teaching of the Bards and Druids in his *Pharsalia* [1.444-465]. "Ye Bards, whose praise transmits to a distant age the names of fallen braves, immune from fear of us have sung your many lays. Ye Druids have returned from scenes of war to rites barbaric and sacrifices unspeakable. To you alone it is given to know or not to know the Gods and divinities of Heaven. Sacred groves in deep retiring glades are your dwelling-places. And your doctrine is, that the shades do not seek the silent abodes of Erebus or the pallid realms of Dis profound, but that the same spirit moves the limbs in another cycle. If you comprehend your teaching, it is this, that death stands between this life and that. Surely the nations of the North are happy in their error, which relieves them of that greatest

fear, the dread of death. And so men rush recklessly upon cold steel; and their souls can death defy, for they think it a coward's part to spare a life that will return." From this passage we learn that our Celtic ancestors believed in the immortality of the soul. It is doubtful whether it was such a belief that gave courage to Lucan himself when he had his veins opened by order of the Emperor. Cæsar also states that the Druids taught the transmigration of souls. We may compare the expressions Moy Mell, the plain of honey, that awaits the arrival of the Celt and *Erdathe*, one of the Druidic terms preserved in the Book of Armagh, which is said to mean "the Day of Judgment of the Lord." [*Tripartite*, II. 308]. This suggests a reason why S. Patrick in the beginning of his Lorica or Breastplate Hymn, referred to God as "the Creator of judgment" (*dail* is gen. of *dal*; *duile* would mean elements); and gives an explanation for his own mighty curse, *modebrod*, "My God's judgment," a malediction which only the rash would provoke and which the Irish saints possessed.*

The Druids were also magicians. The derivation of the name is uncertain. It was originally supposed to be connected with *deru*, oak. But the Irish name was *Draithe*, soothsayers. *Druidecht*, however, means magic in Irish; and in the Irish version of the Bible, the magicians of Egypt are called, "the Druids of

* The malediction upon Egfrid, King of Northumbria, when plundering the plains of Meath, which eventualily, it is said, brought disaster upon him.

Egypt," and the Magi of the East are styled "the Druids from the East." The Druids used inscribed rods of yew, or magic wheels in their profession. "Mug ruith, or servant of the wheel" (the wheel, doubtless, being connected with solar worship), being the name of a Druid whose acquaintance we have already made. They evidently employed such arts, but without avail, against St. Patrick. With this intent they drove left-hand wise, or in an opposite course to the sun, when they went forth to encounter him on the hill of Slane. Lucan's expression, "moremque sinistrum sacrorum," may possibly refer to this method of going leftwards round a place, or person, in order to throw an evil spell upon it or him. Professor Rhys states that there is a pile of stones near Lough Case in Mayo, "round which stations are made, *desiul* (rightwards), except in the case of maliciously disposed persons, who occasionally come on the sly in the dead of night and go round widdershins in order to raise storms to destroy crops and to kill cattle."

An interesting point about the Druids was their peculiar style of tonsure, which was adopted by the Celtic clergy, and which consisted in shaving the head *de aure ad aurem*, from ear to ear, and allowing the hair to grow long at the back. The two Druids, who had the charge of Laogaire's daughters' education, Mael and Caplait, were converted by S. Patrick and gave rise to the Irish proverb, *Cosmail Mael do Chaplait*, "Mael is like to Caplait." For Mael, meaning

bald (of Mull, bald headland), signifies the native tonsure, and Caplait (capillatus, or shorn) indicates the foreign tonsure; and the Celtic clergy resisting the new style of tonsure said, "There is nothing to quarrel about, for a *Mael* is as good as a *Caplait*."

There is a remarkable prophecy of the Druids concerning Christianity, so remarkable that it is suspiciously like an oracle *post eventum*. Of this three different versions are given: * one in the Latin text of Muirchu; a second in the life of S. Patrick, called the *Vita Secunda* in Colgan's *Trias Thaumaturga*, and a third in an Irish gloss on the Hymn *Genair Patraicc* ascribed to the poet Fiacc, a bishop of Slebte and contemporary of S. Patrick. The second of these versions might be rendered: "A man will come with a decorated crown, and with a staff of curved head; and he will chant (charm away?) impiety from his table, from the eastern part of the house, all his people responding: 'So be it,' 'so be it.'"

Many of the Druids joined the ranks of the Christian clergy. Among such was Dubthach, who is described by Muirchu as "an excellent poet," and in Cormac's Glossary as one of "the nine props of the *Senchus Mor*," which is said to have been compiled A.D. 438. At Killeen Cormac, in Kildare, is a very ancient Druid stone with a Latin inscription IVVERE DRVVIDES (A Druid of Ivvera = Ireland) (Rhys),

* Professor Bury in "Tradition of Muirchu's Text," *Hermathena*, XXVIII.

and with an ogam cutting, Ovanos avi Ivacattos, meaning, (the stone) of Ovanus, the descendant of Ivacattus. We owe the decipherment of both inscriptions to the researches of two brilliant scholars, Professors Bury and Rhys.

A laudable attempt to read the inscription had been previously made by the late Father Shearman, who interpreted the Latin as IV VERE DRUVIDES, "the four true Druids"; *i.e.*, Dubthach and his three sons. Another ancient tomb stone, at Crag, in Co. Kerry, bears the inscription VELITAS LUGUTTI, (the tomb) of the poet Lugut,* who was most probably a pagan Druid. Professor Rhys describes another Druid stone found in the Isle of Man. A sign of the complete conquest of Druidism is found in the hymn ascribed to S. Columba, from which Bishop Reeves quoted the line :—

> Is é mo drai Crist mac Dé
> *My Druid is Christ the Son of God.*

This short sketch of those interesting personages of ancient history which we have, from our childhood's days, pictured to ourselves as patriarchal figures with flowing beards, robed in white garments, bearing mistletoe in their hands, armed with sickles and chanting weird songs, might be concluded with a reference to Cæsar's Commentary (De B. G. VI. 16), where they are described as assisting in human sacrifices which were offered by the sick and wounded on the

* Macalister *Studies in Irish Epigraphy.*

principle that the gods require "a man's life for the life of a man." The Welsh have still an order of Bards with Druids and Archdruids, but their office is a mild one in comparison.

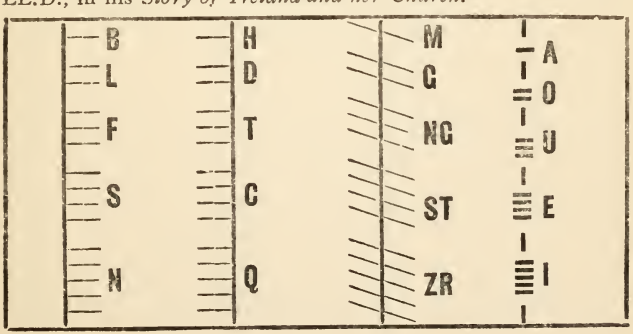
Section 4.—An Ancient Mode of Writing.

We would recommend anyone who desires to know something of the customs and capabilities of the Celtic race to visit the collection of Irish Antiquities in the Dublin Science and Art Museum with Mr. Thomas J. Westropp's excellent guide in his hand. Among the most interesting of these relics are the Ogam stones, which are easily discernible from the strange markings on their sides. This form of script is called Ogam. If you take a stone chisel and a fairly large stone with a square corner and, starting about three inches from the edge, drive a slope score with the chisel to the edge you have an Ogam consonant. Dint the edge itself and you have an Ogam vowel. Variations in the consonants are made by making two, three, four, and five scores together, by driving them now on this side and then on that, or by continuing the score right round the corner so as to be equally on both sides. The consonants above or to the right of the line are—B (1 stroke), L (2 strokes), F (3 strokes), S (4 strokes), N (5 strokes); those below or to the left

are—H. D. T. C. A.; while those across are—M. G. NC. ST. ZR. and P. is represented by X. The vowels A, O, U, E, I are represented by one, two, three, four and five short strokes respectively. * For example, the name Ovanos would be written in Ogam thus :—

This method of writing was distinctly simple, labour-saving, and adapted to instrument and material, as boys who have cut names in the barks of trees, and have found how difficult it is to carve a rounded vowel or consonant, and how easy it is to cut a line or make a notch in the wood, will understand. But as we might expect, the inscriptions are very short, and commemorate the names of obscure personages and their relations. "Maqi" (mac), "son of,";

* The subjoined Table will give some idea of the Ogam characters. A somewhat similar Table is given by Rev. T. Macbeth, LL.D., in his *Story of Ireland and her Church.*



"avi," forefather of, and "poi" (son of?) being the words most generally employed. The name of Vortigern is inscribed on one of the pillars in this collection, a name which was also borne by the unhappy British prince, who invited over the Jutes, Hengist and Horsa, to assist him to repel the Scots and Picts, and by a Welsh prince, whose name is associated with the vicinity of Nevin and the Rivals (Yr Eifl) in Carnarvonshire, where Vortigern's Valley and Vortigern's Grave are still pointed out, and whose connections with Merlin, the Welsh prophet—a Welsh copy of whose prophecies was found near this very place by Gerald of Wales—form the subject of many a thrilling Welsh story. Some of the Ogam inscriptions are to Christian clergy. We have one to a Bigoesgobi, or rural bishop, and another near Dingle, to the memory of S. Monachan at Temple Geal.

This form of writing has given rise to much discussion, with regard both to its origin and its antiquity. Professor Rhys thinks it was invented by some Celt in Wales to represent the letters of the Roman alphabet some centuries after Christ, and that it was then introduced into Ireland. Professor Bury well points out that the Ogam alphabet is simply the Latin, with the three last letters left out and two others added. And it is quite possible that this mode of writing was introduced previous to, and independently of Christianity, as the older stones are distinctly pagan. The Irish alphabet itself, with the

exception of two letters, ꞃ (r) and ꞅ (s), is distinctly the Latin, and was most probably introduced into Ireland by Christian teachers. Tirechan tells us that one of S. Patrick's employments was writing out alphabets (*abgitoria*) for his young men, whom he instructed as well as he was able in the Latin tongue. It is, however, possible that *abgitoria* may mean the A.B.C. of doctrine as Dr. Whitley Stokes suggested.

Section 5.—Ancient Forts and Dwelling Places.

The remains of ancient forts and dwelling places in Ireland are many and various. Some 28,000 forts are scattered over the country, belonging to different ages and called by various names. Some of these, like the Staigue fort and Dun Aengus, may have been built thousands of years B.C. while others may not have been earlier than 1000 A.D. Similar structures are found all over the Continent. The majority are simply great mounds, surrounded in some places by fosses or ditches, and ring walls of stone called cashels (Lat., castellum). Lis, Rath, Dun, Moher and Caher are the favourite names for these fortified homesteads. The duns seem to have been the residences of the princes, and the cahers—of which the best specimen the writer has seen is in Kilfenora Glebe, Co. Clare—were

generally stone forts. A very small proportion of these forts were made by the Danes, as they are principally found where the Vikings never gained a footing, and are regarded with a superstitious veneration which the Celtic people could hardly be expected to entertain for the abodes of the fell Northmen, who in revenge for the crusade of Charlemagne against their own countrymen, destroyed the illuminated manuscripts, shrines, churches, and sanctuaries of Erin, and performed their own bloody rites on the altars of the churches, as Ota, wife of Turgesius, did at Clonmacnois.

One of the best preserved and most prettily-situated rath the writer has seen stands on an elevation in the demesne of Castle Bernard, Kinnitty. It is circular in form, thirty feet high, but was most probably higher in olden days, and is fifty-five yards in diameter. The vallum slopes down in the form of a perfect glacis. There are also traces of the ancient *chevaux de frise* which defended the summit. Some curiously carved stones were found here, among them the figure of a monk on horseback in the dress of the Chaucer period. The fort is within sight of other raths on the Cumber mountains, and in the vicinity of an early Celtic cross, in one of the panels of which is depicted, as it is believed, the conversion of Aengus, King of Cashel, and father of S. Colman, who gave his name to Kilcoleman, near Birr. Beneath it lie the ruined wall with a solitary single-light window of the ancient

OF CALIFORNIA

abbey of S. Finan and about twenty stone steps of the Abbey tower. It commands an extensive view of the hills and valleys around, which are attractively grouped and planted.

Perhaps the most interesting of all these ancient remains are the rath chambers or souterrains which are called *uath* (ooa). Of these artificial caves there is a specimen in Lisnahoon (the fort with the cave) in Roscommon. They were evidently used for storage and concealment. A number of these caves have been found in the County of Londonderry. A very good specimen is to be seen at Lisrenny, Co. Louth, the residence of Capt. W. De S. Filgate, M.F.H., a friend of the writer. In Kerry, the Isles of Arran and Innismurray, off the coast of Donegal, there is found a peculiar kind of dome-shaped building built of rough stone without mortar, with a low, lintel-covered entrance, and with a roof formed by the gradual approach of the horizontal layers of stone, until they are capped by one central flag, like the sepulchral chamber of New Grange. Similar dome-shaped cells are found in Syria. These are called Clochans, or beehive huts, and were the sort of dwellings that stood within the ring walls of the stone forts in the West, where the people had little or no timber for fortifications. To these primitive structures the ancient oratories of Christian clergy, such as that of St. Finan Cam and Gallerus, on the coast of Kerry, assigned by Dr. Petrie to an earlier date than the time of St. Patrick, and

the monastic cells on the Skelligs bear a resemblance, being built without knowledge of the arch and of stones dovetailed without mortar. But while the beehive house of St. Finan Cam in Lough Lee is of the rudest description, the difference in form and finish between the round stone house, or clochan, in the north island of Arran, and the conical-shaped neat little house of Gallerus might mark a gap of at least a thousand years.

The two great forts in the West which every tourist should visit are the Dun Aengus on the largest of the Arran isles and Staigue-an-or in Kerry. Dun Aengus, situated on a bold headland in Arranmore is one of the finest of these primitive structures. It consists of a triple line of fortifications, of which the two inner lines of horseshoe pattern are well preserved. Its abattis of jagged stone is still a formidable defence. From the Dun, which is supposed to be the residence of an ancient Firbolg chief, there is a magnificent view of Galway Bay. The Arran islands, which contain a number of interesting Christian ruins, are reached in small steamers from Galway. The Staigue-an-or stands on the mainland of Kerry. A conveyance from the hotel in Waterville brings the tourist there in a few hours. It is, indeed, a unique and remarkable structure. Four miles from Lake Coppal, surrounded by an amphitheatre of bleak hills, it stands on a low eminence from which a good view can be had of the Kenmare river and of the bold peninsula, which Owen

More, the warlike King of Munster, who is also known as Mogh Nuadhat, named after his Spanish wife Beara. But the principal object of interest is the fort, of which a model is shown in the Museum. Surrounded by a broad fosse it stands, a circular stone fort of cyclopean size, constructed without tool or mortar, but not without skill or art. The average height is 18 feet, and breadth 13 feet, and it encloses a space of some 90 feet in diameter. There are cells built in the wall, the face of which has a curious backward slope, or batter, on both sides. It would seem to have been built to serve as a place of refuge for the people and their cattle, what time the Firbolgs began to feel the pressure of the Celts by land and sea.

The three forts we shall next visit were the habitations of Celtic princes of a later age. Grianan of Aileach, the palace or sunny residence of the O'Loughlins, still called Greenan-Ely, stands on a high hill some four miles from Derry and was evidently a place of considerable strength. It is surrounded by three concentric ramparts which were strengthened by a "sonnach" of stakes and a stone wall or cashel, and commands a glorious view of Loughs Foyle and Swilly. Of Rathcrochan in Roscommon, the head-quarters of the O'Conors, nothing remains but massive mounds and raths, to indicate the place where the warlike Queen Maev resided in state, and where S. Patrick met the beautiful daughters of Laogaire; while a red

stone marks the spot where Dathi, his predecessor, is said to be buried. Of Kincora, the famous Dun of the O'Brians at Killaloe, which the Annals of Lough Cé tell us was burned in 1107, when "seventy tons of drink called mead and of old ale" were destroyed, a description will be given in another place. Many similar duns were used by Irish chieftains even in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Fynes Morison in his *History of Ireland*, thus describes one of these habitations—"The fort of Innislouglan is seated in the midst of a peat bog, and is no way accessible but through thick woods very hardly passable. It has about it two deep ditches, both compassed with strong palisades, a very high and thick rampart of earth and timber, and well flanked with bulwarks."

The Anglo-Saxon thanes in England had similarly fortified and constructed residences of earth and timber before the arrival of the Normans, who taught the Saxons how to build stone castles. The Irish were not slow to learn the same lesson. In 1161, more than 10 years before Hugh De Lacy built his noble castles of Kilkea, Trim, and Leighlin Bridge, King Roderic O'Connor erected at Tuam a strong stone castle which was called "The Wonderful Castle," and which was, perhaps, the first stone castle built by an Irish prince. It had a central keep and courtyard, was fortified by strong towers connected by lofty curtain walls, and was protected by a deep moat. Behind these walls and entrenchments the Irish

chieftains dispensed lavish hospitality and lived in rude magnificence until their neighbours burnt down their residences or the English cannon balls began to whistle about their ears a tune very different from that of the birds in the fairy glades. The actual houses in which they resided have perished long since. And this is not surprising when we consider the frail materials of earth, timber, and wattles of which they were constructed. The Irish were famous for their wattle work, which was generally used for roofing, for bridges, and for the carrying of turf. The palace that was built outside the walls of Dublin, near where St. Andrew's Church now stands, for the entertainment of Henry II., on his visit to Ireland, was made of earth and wattles. The hurdle-roofing is to be traced in the sacristy in Clonfert Cathedral. The bridge that spanned the Shannon at Athlone, before the Elizabethan structure on which De Ginkle met the forces of St. Ruth was constructed, was of wicker, and Dublin was called Ath-cliath, or the ford of the hurdles. Indeed many of the mediæval castles in England were made of the same material.

The Celtic chiefs also lived on artificial islands or *crannogs* in the midst of bogs and lakes which are compared with the pile dwellings on the Swiss lakes. The writer has visited the crannogs at Loughrea and in Lough Derg. On the former the bones of an extinct elk were found, and the latter, which are generally called "the Corageens," look like natural

islands with their plantations of fir, and are attractively situated in a beautiful lake. These may have been the islands mentioned as having been repaired by King Brian in 1002. For it is not unlikely that they were ravaged and burnt to the water's edge by the same Danes who plundered and destroyed the Seven Churches and Celtic settlement on Inniscaltra or Holy Isle, some four miles lower down the Shannon. The mode in which these islands in Lough Derg was constructed is very simple. The foundation of stones was first made on a shallow portion of the lake, and on these loose material branches and earth were heaped, stakes having been previously driven deep down into the ground and cross beams lashed or mortised to them to form a platform, on which the family built their wooden dwellings and worked securely at their various employments, until the Danes or their own countrymen disturbed their rest and cut short their careers. Of these crannogs, which number some 200, and which were in use down to the days of Queen Elizabeth, there are many varieties. Walled islands and island forts are mentioned in the Annals, and are found in Galway and Donegal. It would seem that lawless bands occasionally occupied a fortified crannog, where they stored their plunder, and from which they made their raids upon their more peaceful neighbours. S. Fechan of Fore had occasion to curse a dun in Lough Leane, and S. Ciaran, of Clonmacnois, had to clear an island "inhabited by

Gentiles and rabble." And this was probably done by burning them out. Indeed, the danger the inhabitants of the crannog had to fear from friend and foe was fire. It is not many years ago since one of the crannogs in Lough Derg was burnt to the water's edge through the carelessness of some holiday-makers.

Section 6.—Ecclesiastical Architecture.

The early ecclesiastical buildings of the Celts were very homely structures. They possess much interest for the antiquarian, but little beauty or grace, being small and oblong, without apse or chancel. A great number of them seem to have been built of earth and wattles, as the name *duirtheach*, "house of oak," suggests; and could be moved about like the oratory of St. Moling, in Carlow. Bede tells us that when Finan, who was an Irishman, was made bishop of Lindisfarne, "he built a church suitable for his See, but did not construct it of stone, but of sawn oak, and covered it with reeds, after the manner of the Scots." But many of these primitive churches were built and roofed of stone, and were called *daimhliags*, or stone houses. Very interesting specimens of these are the churches of S. MacDara, in Galway Bay (15 feet by 11 feet); Tempull Ceannanach, off the shores of Connemara; the chapel of S. Molaise, the friend of

Columbkille, in Innismurray (12 feet by 8 feet); and the small church on Ireland's Eye, formerly called Inis Mac Nessan, where S. Nessan and his sons worshipped in days of old, and probably heard the Scriptures expounded from a famous copy of the Gospels, called the Garland of Howth. It is believed that S. Patrick introduced this style of building into Ireland. The general length of the larger stone churches seems to have been 60 feet; but the Cathedral of Armagh in the 9th century was 140 feet long. In another chapter of this book, the writer will describe two of the most interesting and artistic of these stone-roofed oratories and churches, those of S. Molua and S. Flannan, at Killaloe.

The "dear departed" Ecclesiastical Commissioners evidently intended to revive this type of church architecture, for they repudiated chancels and towers, and erected small, low, rectangular buildings of the style that is generally described as "squat." In the ruins of a church at Dean's Grange, Blackrock, one can see that the original church was rectangular and of rubblestone; but the improving hand of the Norman came, broke through the eastern wall, and added a chancel of cut stone. Neither was the primitive Celtic monastery at all like the magnificent stone structures of mediæval times. It was simply a collection of small circular huts of wood or wattle, with three or four of larger dimensions to serve as a church, kitchen, and residence of the abbot, who had to keep an eye on everything, surrounded by a circular rampart and

palisade, and sometimes with a cashel. Colgan's *Vita Tripartita*, p. 226, gives an interesting record of the dimensions of one of these settlements, which may, as Professor Bury suggests, represent the typical scheme of the monastic establishments of Patrick and his companions. The measurements are—"27 feet (diameter?) in the Great House, 17 feet in the kitchen, 7 feet in the aregal (oratory); and it was thus that he used always to found the *congbala* (monasteries)."

The variety of names for church and oratory in Irish, e.g., cill, eaglais, tempull, domnach, aireagal, and urnaide expresses not only the eloquence of the language but doubtless also a difference in the architecture and purpose of the building. Those who are sufficiently familiar with the names Kildare, Kilcullen, Killeen, Shankhill (old church), and Templemore, may not at first recognise the Latin ecclesia in the Irish, Eglish, or Aglish, the Latin *Dominica* in *Donagh*-Patrick, the Latin oraculum in Errigal, and the Latin oratorium in Urney. The Cymric word *lann*, so frequent in Welsh names of sacred places, is also used for Church as in Lynally (for Lann-Elo), Glenavy (lann-abhaich, the dwarf's church); and Baslick (Lat. Basilica) is also found. The churches that were founded on Sunday (Dies Dominica) were called Donagh (Domhnach), the more pretentious edifices were doubtless called Eglish and Baslic; while those that may have occupied the site of some pagan shrine were called *temple* (Lat. templum,

Irish teampull). Templetuohy, or the temple of the tuath or tribe, seems to point to some such connection.

We have seen that in many cases, especially in the west, the cells of the monks—for the Celtic Church was originally monastic—were of stone. But it would seem that even when this was not the case that the Abbot's residence was a stone square building, higher than the rest, so that he might supervise more conveniently the life and doings of the whole establishment. A good specimen of the Abbot's residence is to be seen in S. Columba's House, Kells, which, like that of S. Kevin's, at Glendalough; S. Molaise's, on Devenish Island; and S. Declan's, at Ardmore, combines an oratory and a dwelling-house. It is altogether of stone, like that of S. Erc, at Slane, and consists, like S. Kevin's House, of two stories, the lower being 19 feet long, 15 feet broad, and 25 feet high, with walls 3 feet 10 inches thick. This served as an oratory, the entrance being like that of the Round Towers in the west wall, some 8 feet from the ground. It was roofed with stone, and upon it another building raised also of stone and divided into three small garrets, which are not higher than 6 feet in any place, and in one of these a stone slab is shown as the penitential couch of the Saint. The remarkable feature about S. Erc's hermitage is the cave hewn out beneath the rudely built anchorite's cell. Such hermitages were scattered all over Ireland in the days when the anchorite's life became the fashion through

the influence of a remarkable person in Synia S. Simeon Stylites, as we may learn from the number of Irish names of places beginning with Desert or Disert, and Anchor or Ankers; and were sometimes attached to large monasteries, as at Iona and Lindisfarne. For example, when we read in Bede's History that Cuthbert died "in the desert," we understand that he did not die in a wilderness like the Sahara, but in the anchorite's cell attached to the monastery. Of the abodes of the Anchorites, who belonged to the third order of the Irish Saints, "the holies,"* the most interesting perhaps is S. Doulough's. The writer visited it ten years ago, in company with Canon Robert Walsh, author of *Fingall and its Churches*, and others, and has a vivid recollection of the small stone bunk of 5 feet long, 2 feet wide, and 2½ feet high, into which the Saint crept at night through a small hole in the floor to enjoy as uncomfortable a rest as he could inflict upon himself. The crypt beneath is divided into two small apartments, in one of which stands the altar tomb of the Saint, and, doubtless, of his successors also; for it was the custom, as Marianus Scotus, the celebrated Irish scribe, of Ratiesbon, tells us, for the enclosed anchorites to say their prayers and read the services standing on the grave of their predecessors.

* Ussher Works VI., page 478, gives the three orders. The first order were most holy. "They did not reject the services and society of women because they did not fear the blast of temptation, being founded on a rock." The second were "more holy." These rejected the help of women and kept them away from their monasteries.

Between this abode and the octagonal Baptistery erected over the well, a remarkable and beautiful building, there used to be an underground connection, through which the Saint crept when he was required to baptize a convert or a babe.

As the years rolled on, the Celtic establishments were built in a more durable manner of stone, and were generally protected by a lofty Round Tower. But the general principle of the cœnobitic system which was borrowed from the East, where each monk had his own private cell, prevailed. In fact, it was this principle that gave the name of monastery, which means the residence of the solitary ones (monastes) to these institutions. In the later Celtic institutions we generally find seven small churches* and high pictorial crosses. For instance, Glendalough (the Glen of the lakes), in County Wicklow, once rejoiced in the name "The Seven Churches," one of which, called S. Kevin's Kitchen, is 22 feet long and 15 feet wide, with a high-pitched roof and a circular turret at the west end; and Clonmacnois (the meadow of the son of Nos), near Athlone, founded by Kiaran Macan-tsoir, or Kiaran, son of the carpenter, one of the most celebrated of the Irish Saints, was also called "Seven Churches" from the number of its ecclesiastical remains. Those

* The number seven corresponded, doubtless, with the same number of Bishops. In those days, before the diocesan episcopate was introduced, we often find groups of Bishops living together. In the Litany of Œngus the Culdee, mention is made of 138 groups of seven Bishops.

who have imagination may picture to themselves the gala day when S. Columba, after inspecting his own monastery at Durrow (Dairmag, the field of oaks), visited S. Kiaran's foundation, and was received with hymns and homage, being carried on a litter with a canopy of branches over his head, by the Abbot and the brothers into their then homely enclosure. A century passed and the brothers of these rival monasteries were engaged in a bitter strife, which ended in the victory of Clonmacnois. In fact, the monks and students of these ancient colleges, for they resembled colleges more nearly than convents, as their work was teaching and writing, as dearly loved a battle as the college students of our day love a foot-ball match. S. Columba himself had to leave Ireland on the advice of his soul-friend S. Molaise, because of a fight he and his men had with S. Finnian, of Moville, and his at Cooldrevny (561). Temple Kiaran, 12 feet by 9 feet, was evidently the oratory of the Saint. The Cathedral is assigned to the 10th century. In Innismurray there are still three or four diminutive churches standing amid the seven stone bee-hive cells that remain of the foundation of S. Molaise. In Inniscalthra, or holy isle, there are the remains of seven small churches; and in Inniscleraun, or Quaker Island, famous in the story of Queen Maev, in Lough Ree, there are four churches within the cashel, one of which, Diarmit's Chapel, is $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet long by $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet broad, and the doorway is 4 feet 9 inches by 1 foot

8 inches, while there is a lady chapel and a female burial place outside the cashel, and a sixth church on the hill. Only one of these has a chancel.

But any person who desires to see Celtic ecclesiastical art, as distinguished from that introduced in later centuries by the Norman barons and the Cistercian and Franciscan monks, of whose cathedral churches at Mellifont and Ardfert there are still many exquisite remains, should inspect the West Doorway of Clonfert Cathedral, which is a beautiful specimen of the Hiberno-Romanesque architecture, and dates from 1166; the Hiberno-Romanesque Chancel arch in Cormac's chapel on the famous Rock of Cashel, which was used at the famous Synod of 1172; and the Celtic crosses at Monasterboice, Kells, and Clonmacnois. The historical taste of the teachers of Clonmacnois is shown by the very ancient manuscripts that were written there; the *Annals* compiled by Abbot Tigernach, who died in 1088; the *Chronicon Scotorum*, a continuation of the same down to 1150; and the *Leabhar-na-Huidhre*, a vellum MS. transcribed from an old record in the 11th century by Maolmaire of Clonmacnois.

As the early churches were without towers, the people were summoned to prayers by hand bells, of which there are a sufficient variety in the Museum. Of these the most venerated is the Bell of the Will of Patrick (Clog-an-Eadachta-Phatraic), presented by S. Columba to the Church of Armagh, and said to

have been taken by him from the tomb of the Saint. It is roughly made of two iron plates and stands but 6 inches high. But the value the Celtic Church set upon this bell may be judged from the beauty of the richly ornamented brass shrine which was made to hold it when Donald was Bishop of Armagh (1092-1106). Both these sacred relics had been carefully preserved in the custody of the Mulhollands, the hereditary "coarbs" or curators, for many centuries, and they were finally purchased by Dr. Todd, and presented by his executors to the Royal Irish Academy. The possession of this bell carried certain advantages with it. As shrines were generally deposited in churches, which were afterwards known by the name of Skreen or Skrine, it is not unlikely that it was the carrying away of this bell from a church that is meant by the "Annals of Ulster," which describe a warlike expedition and the seizure of 1,200 cows and a multitude of captives, "in revenge for the *violation* of the Bell of the Will." All the bells are not as rudely made and rivetted as this square black bell of our patron Saint. Some of the cast bronze bells display excellent workmanship and design. The Bell of the Will of S. Patrick does not seem, however, to have been always used for a sacred purpose. Like the shrine of S. Columba, which is called the "Cathach" or Battler, from being carried by the O'Donnells into battle, this bell became a mighty power in the fray, as the poet tells us:

"Two hundred Kings, without doubt
With their famous troops,
The bell of the mild cleric shall kill,
O King of Glory, with it is my love."

The hand bells, for all their beauty of workmanship and sacred associations, proved insufficient as the Christian communities grew in size to summon them to prayer. Larger bells were required, and towers had to be erected for them. As the bells were square at first, and afterwards round, the church towers were round at first and afterwards square. In Inniscleraun there is a church the tower of which shows the stage of transition from the round to the square. In one of the churches of Glendalough there is a small circular belltower with conical roof in the exact form of one of the Round Towers. And in the parish of Seirkeiran, where S. Kiaran of Saigir, a possible predecessor of S. Patrick, lived, there is a good specimen of a round church tower, which must not, however, be confused with the celebrated Round Towers, to which we shall return. This, indeed, may have been built some centuries after Kiaran's time, and by the side of it an early church may have stood.* In connection with Seirkeiran, it is an interesting fact that it once possessed a bell called "Bearnan Kiarnan," or the gapped bell of Kiaran, which S. Patrick is said to have conferred

* The writer does not mean to say that church towers were used in early times. Indeed it is well known that the earliest Celtic churches were without them. Gregory of Turin is the first to mention a church with tower and pharos.

on Kiaran, and that this bell was first rung on the hill now called Bell Hill. It was the midnight bell that summoned S. Columba on that last night in his life to prayers and rest, and as the dawn was breaking the Saint passed away with a face, as his chronicler, Adamnan, relates, "like that of a man who had seen a vision of heaven."

Section 7.—The Celtic Schools and their Art.

If we were to ask where the highest types of Celtic Life and Art were found, the answer from all sides would be, in the Ancient Celtic schools. The distinctly liberal system of education by which Greek, Latin, logic, rhetoric, mathematics, geography, and astronomy, as we learn from the Celtic works on these subjects that remain, were taught, attracted scholars of the highest rank from every quarter of Europe, and excited the jealousy of the celebrated Aldhelm of Malmesbury. Among the most famous of these colleges was the monastic school of Clonard, where 3,000 students were ruled by S. Finnian, who trained S. Columba, the founder of the celebrated College of Iona and S. Comgall, the first principal of the Divinity School of Bangor, in county Down. Numbers of the English nobility, as the Venerable Bede informs us, came over to Ireland "either for

the purpose of studying the Word of God or to follow a stricter life." It is said that Dagobert II. of France was educated in the old Abbey school on the hill of Slane, and among other Irish scholars were Oswald and Alfrid, Kings of Northumbria; Gildas, the British historian; Agilbert, Bishop of Paris; S. Willibrod, Archbishop of Utrecht; S. Paternus of Brittany, and others of equally great fame. The attainments of Irish scholarship in that age are shown by the remarkable facts that the only member of the Court of Charles the Bald of France who could translate a Greek book was an Irishman, John Scotus Erigena; that the favourite recreation of S. Columbanus was the composition of Latin verses; that an Irishman, Virgil, Bishop of Salzburg, in the 8th century was called "the Geometer" because of his mathematical genius, which led him to prove the sphericity of the globe; that Alcuin, the Englishman who was commissioned about 800 A.D. by Charlemagne to prepare an amended edition of the Scriptures, had received part of his education in the Irish school of Clonmacnois, and that he sent a letter to Colchu, "the Chief Scribe and Master of the Scots," (Irish) in which he addresses him as his "blessed master and pious father," and a donation of 200 silver sicli from Charlemagne for certain Irish monasteries; and that Charlemagne in his great work of reviving learning found his best allies in two Irish scholars, Clemens and Albinus, whom he made wardens of two of his colleges.

The Irish schools treated their pupils with the greatest consideration, charging nothing, as Bede informs us, for board and lodging, books and instruction. But it was neither the secular studies nor the hospitality of the Celtic schools, but the study and illumination of the Scriptures, that have made them immortal. As scribes of the Scriptures the Irish clergy have been renowned from the days of S. Patrick, who was called "the Man of the Bible," from his habit of presenting each of the churches he founded with "the Books of the Law and the Books of the Gospel," and S. Columba, who is said to have made 300 copies of the Scriptures with his own hand. Of these books, containing illuminated transcriptions of the Scriptures the great majority shared the fate of the celebrated Saxon libraries of Peterborough and Croyland, being burnt by the Danes. But there are many Irish manuscripts to be seen in the great libraries on the Continent, especially those of St. Gall (founded by S. Columbanus, an Irishman), Bobbio, and Würzburg. In the last-named library there is a complete commentary on the Epistles of S. Paul, written in the Irish language of the ninth century, which is distinctly valuable; and in the French National Library there was found a quaint Irish work, called *De Mensura Orbis*, or "The Survey of the World," written by Dicuil, an Irish monk of the ninth century, which gives an interesting account of Iceland, which was evangelised by Irish Christians long before the Danes

landed there in 874. We have also in the "Book of Armagh" a complete copy of the New Testament; in the "Book of Kells," a copy of the Gospels; in the "Book of Durrow," a manuscript of the Gospels, most probably copied from that used by S. Columba himself; in the "Book of Moling or Mulling," a rather imperfect copy of the Gospels, and in the "Stowe St. John" portions of that Gospel.

But we are not concerned here with the text of these Gospels, which, though based on the Vulgate of S. Jerome, shows thoughtful and independent editing, but with the wonderful skill in the arts of caligraphy and illumination which they display. The Book of Kells, which belongs to the 8th century, is said to be the most beautiful book in the world. Giraldus Cambrensis described it as the work rather "of angelic than of human skill." It is the most perfect specimen extant of Irish penmanship. It contains 354 pages, 11 inches by 10, is written in uncials, or capitals, and is remarkable for the superb art and intricacy of its designs, and the harmonious, brilliant, and varied effects produced by four simple dyes—black, red, purple, and yellow. The ornamental designs principally consist of interlaced bands, and weird, snake-like and bird-like forms. The uncouth drawing of the figures is obscured by the excellence of the scrivener's art and his illuminative skill.

Whence came this art, and whereunto may we liken it? are questions that rise to our lips as we pore

over the pictured pages of this wonderful book in the Library of Trinity College. The art certainly came from Byzantium, the seat of ecclesiastical art and architecture, where it reached a high degree of perfection, but the Celtic artists developed it in their own way. Now there is an illuminated manuscript in the British Museum, which is described by an English expert as "the most perfect existing specimen of the English handwriting." It is the copy of the Gospels, known as the "Durham Book," that was made in Lindisfarne, now called Holy Isle, off the coast of Northumberland, where S. Aidan, an Irishman from S. Columba's College at Iona, founded a church and a school, which was for many years a centre of learning and light in the North of England. One of the successors of this S. Aidan, who is described by Bede, the historian, as a real saint in charity, tenderness, diligence, and devotion, was S. Cuthbert, who, besides being an Irishman, was a devoted student and scholar. It was under the directions, and, doubtless, with the assistance, of S. Cuthbert that Eadfrith, his successor, completed this copy, which was covered, ornamented and translated into Saxon by the three bishops who succeeded Eadfrith. Its interlaced designs and illuminated work resemble the Irish manuscripts so closely that they seem to have been taken from the same model. There is a very remarkable church still standing in Monkwearmouth (Sunderland), built by a Saxon, Benedict Biscop in 674, and

containing a corner of a sculptured slab built into the vestry wall, which shows the same kind of interlaced patterns that are found in the Lindisfarne manuscript. The Right Rev. G. F. Browne, Bishop of Bristol, the Church Historian, in his *Notes on Monkwearmouth Church*, calls the class of work "Irish Ornamentation," and regards the tracery on the slab and the designs in the manuscript as the work of the same hand. It is interesting to find that the work, which is described by an expert as "the most perfect existing specimen of the English handwriting" is regarded by another authority as "Irish ornamentation." At Tellinge, a small Danish hamlet in Jutland, where the Danish Vikings held their wassail in their ancient palace after those expeditions, which cost Ireland and England so many precious manuscripts and shrines, there were two remarkable Runic monuments raised by Harald II., who became a Christian, to his parents, Gjorm and Thyra; and these also, in their strange figures and interwoven bands, resemble the Irish ornamental and interlaced work on vellum and stone. It is quite possible that they were engraved by an Irish scribe, who was either the friend or the prisoner of King Harald (A.D. 935).

The Irish scribe, who could produce such work, was a person of consequence in the establishment. The title of scribe was often given to an abbot or bishop to enhance his position. Alcuin addresses Colchu as "the Chief Scribe." In an illuminated MS. of Giraldus

Cambrensis there is a quaint picture of the scribe engaged at his work with style and quill, dressed in greenish-brown jacket and light-coloured trousers. The post was honourable but onerous. There are many notes on the margins of the manuscripts, made by the scribes, in which they sometimes relieved their feelings. In one of these, a monk at Würzburg tells us that though only his three fingers have been writing, his whole body has been occupied in the work, "*quia tribus digitis scribitur et totus membrus laboret.*"

The Irish schools were also celebrated for the high class of metal work they turned out. Within the walls of the "civitas," or "family," the skilled artist in gold and silver and bronze was highly esteemed. Indeed, he might aspire, like Conlath of Kildare, to a bishopric. The principal employment of these artists was the making of ornamental shrines for the Books that have been mentioned and others, for bells, croziers, and crosses. The Cross of Cong, the Chalice of Ardagh, the Domnach Airgid, or "Silver Shrine" of S. Patrick's Gospels, and the crozier of Clonmacnois which are chiefly of bronze inlaid with silver, ornamented with gold filigree, and set with crystals and native pearls, are fair specimens of the metal and filigree work of the ancient Irish schools of art. The illuminated manuscripts, the sculptured stone crosses (which will be described in the account of Slane), the delicately wrought and inlaid book shrines or "cumdachs," the embossed "bachalls" or croziers, the

ornate polaires or satchels, in which the manuscripts were preserved (of which there is a good specimen in Trinity College) and which were saved from the unsparing hands of the Danes by being carried beyond the seas, deposited in the Round Towers, or buried in the ground, give us a general idea of what the Celtic schools could achieve in metal work, sculpture, and the illuminative art before the Danes or Normans invaded the island.

TYPES OF CELTIC LIFE AND ART.

CHAPTER I.

THE CELTIC RACE.

THE first historical inhabitants of Erin with whom we come in contact are the Gaels. The Tuatha De Danaan move in the dim distance, great shadowy figures, wrapt in myth and wonderlore. From them sprang that mighty man Finn McCool, whose mother was "Muirne the smooth neck, daughter of Tadg, son of Nuada, of the Tuatha De Danaan," and whose quoits and race course are pointed out on the Kerry Coast by the mouth of the Casan river. They were succeeded by the Iberian race or Firbolgs, who were driven westward by the Celts, and whose long and narrow skulls, found in the western caves, bear a strong resemblance to the remains in the gravel pits of the Basque provinces. The massive stone forts in the County Kerry, of which the Staigue-an-Or, near Lake Coppal, is chief, and the Arran Isles are doubtless their handiwork. And there where that people made their last stand we find to-day a distinct nationality, men of small stature and long narrow heads. These Firbolgs—a dark, wiry little folk—

may be the original of "the little people" (the leprechauns or fairies) who have so real an existence in the imagination of the Celt. They were reduced to servitude by the Celts, and called Aitheach-Tuatha, corrupted into Attacotti. The Milesians and Celts are most probably the same. For Mil or Milid means warrior, and so do Goidel, Goth, and Celt. But the Picts (Cruithne), whose headquarters was Emania, were evidently a different race.

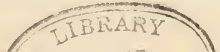
One of the Iberian forts (Murbech) in Arranmore was named from Mil :—

> "Adar made his residence in the South
> They stationed Mil at Murbech."

There is some foundation, moreover, for the existence of Eber, Erimon and Ith (1). Few Irishmen, however, can trace their pedigree back to the flood; although some of the Western families claim to be descended from Cormac Cas, after whom they were called Dalcassians. With the Celts the history of Erin begins. They were an Aryan race that passed into Europe from the highlands of India, pressing hard upon the Greek and Roman Empires, but were finally crushed by Cæsar and the Germans in Europe, and in England were eventually driven by Saxon and Dane into Cornwall, Wales, Cumbria, and Caledonia. It is believed that the Galatians, to whom S. Paul wrote the Epistle, in which he said, "O ye Galatians who hath bewitched you?"

(1) See *Studies in Early Irish History*, by Prof. Rhys.

were of the same race as the Celts of Ireland and Britain. This people were remarkable for their childlike piety, bravery, and devotion to family and clan. In this spirit of clanship and adherence to tradition, we have, as Todd points out, the keynote of Irish history. Of a highly organized and sensitive disposition, the Celt lacked the staying power and steady purpose of the Saxon, his less versatile but more strenuous opponent. And in muscular development and athletic power the Gaels or Celts take a place second to none. When they were subdued by the Saxons they became, as Mommsen says, "merged as a leaven of future development in a politically superior nationality." In appearance they were tall, fair-haired and grey-eyed, and their weapons were of iron and bronze. The name Celt, which is identified with Gall by Todd, is said to come from an old word which means to cast, because these people used to hurl their weapons from a distance. The word war also comes from a root (werf) meaning to throw. Hence the words Gall and Celt came to mean warrior. These Celts are found to day, in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales; in the highlands of the first two countries and throughout the last, using their native tongue as well as the English. In the early days of English history the Celts were called Scoto-Milesians and Scots. St. Prosper of Aquitaine mentions the fact that Palladius preached to the Scots of both countries; Bede calls Hibernia "the island of the Scots" and "the fatherland of the Scots," and Eginhard, the secretary of Charlemagne, calls it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"the island of the Scots." From the fifth to the tenth century Ireland was, it would seem, known as Scotia. And it was not until the eleventh century that Erin ceased to be called Scotia, and Alba came to be known by that name. "All the inhabitants of Hibernia," wrote Buchanan, the tutor of James VI. of Scotland, "were originally called Scoti, as Orosius points out, and our own annals tell us that there was more than one migration of the Scoti from Hibernia into Albania." The grand result of this movement of the northern clans of Hibernia, which spread over some centuries, was the establishment of a Scotic principality in Argyle, which eventually dominated the whole of the northern portion of the island, and gave to Scotland its Christian religion, its laws and monarchy. Though, perhaps, less numerous than the Picts, the Lothians, and the Britons who occupied the island, the Scots were the most vigorous and enterprising. From them went forth Columba, St. Columkille, the apostle of the Picts, and in the ninth century, Kenneth, their chief, became King of Caledonia. And from this McAlpin line were descended the Bruces, the Stuarts, and the present royal family of Great Britain. They moved their seat of rule from Inverlochy to Scone and thence to Edinburgh, carrying with them the Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny, the original of which, according to Dr. Petrie, was left unnoticed on the grassy mounds of Tara. To-day the descendants of the Gael are found in the highland clans, the bonneted and plaided Scotsmen, who belong originally to

the same race and the same land as the Celtic inhabitants of Erin.

A protest against this view of the case has been recently made by Mr. E. W. Nicholson in his *Keltic Studies*. He indignantly repudiates the idea that the Picts were ever defeated by the Scots. It may be a shock to Irish nerves to hear Mr. Nicholson exclaim: "To suppose that the great free people from which he is descended were ever conquered by a body of Irish colonists, and that the language he speaks is merely an Irish colonial dialect are delusions which, he hopes no one will regret to see finally dispelled." For we have been accustomed to think that a few Irish colonists conquered Scotland and established a kingdom there. However, the writer offers us some compensation. For he goes on to say, that "Lancashire, West Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Cambridgeshire, Wiltshire, Somerset and part of Sussex are as Keltic as Perthshire and North Munster; that Cheshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire, Devon, Dorset, Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire and Bedfordshire are more so, and equal to North Wales and Leinster; while Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire exceed even this degree, and are on a level with South Wales and Ulster. Cornwall, of course, is more Keltic than any other English county, and as much so as Argyll, Invernesshire or Connaught," and thus allows that a great proportion of the "brutal Saxons" are as Keltic as the Kelts themselves, just as

their descendants became more Irish than the Irish.

With regard to the Irish people, it is interesting to read what strangers thought of them :—

Spenser says: "The Irish are one of the most ancient nations that I know of in this world, and come of as mighty a race as the world ever brought forth."

The Celts were large-bodied and large-hearted men.

Ingentes animos ingenti corpore versant.

The men of Tipperary are described as having "hearts as big as bulls, and to their foes as fierce, but to women or friend as soft as thrushes." They seem to have been a noisy people, fond of talking and laughter, but sympathetic and emotional, easily excited to action, impatient of suffering, hopeful and despondent by turns. "The Gauls," said Strabo, "march openly to their end, and are thus easily circumvented." The Celts of Ireland may have lost from never having been invaded and conquered by the Romans, but what they lost in organization they gained in freedom of spirit. The Irish at the time of Henry II's. invasion were something like the Celts of England when Caesar landed on the shores of Kent, free and unfettered, brave and warlike clans, which only wanted system and discipline to conquer their invaders. Tacitus tells us that Agricola maintained that Ireland could be conquered and held by a single legion, and that its

conquest was desirable from the Roman standpoint, as the neighbourhood of a free country made the Britons harder to govern. How near Ireland was to a Roman invasion may be seen from a glance at the twenty-fourth chapter of the *Life of Agricola*, where we read that the Roman Governor of Britain had received one of the petty Irish kings, who had been driven out by internal faction, and detained him under the semblance of friendship till he could make use of him. But he was recalled by his jealous master, Domitian, in 90 A.D., before he could effect his purpose. When Giraldus came to Ireland, in company with his Welsh relations, the Barrys and Fitzstephens, it struck him as a new land, "being separated from the rest of the known world." In his day, the Norman oppression, and the feudal system had created a vast change in the conditions of life for Briton and Saxon in England and Wales. But, thanks to the restlessness of the Irish Sea, Erin had so far escaped feudal thraldom as well as Roman conquest.

At the time of Strongbow's invasion, the people were divided into tribes, with Brehons, Minstrels, Bards, and Harpers. Christian clergy had taken the place of the Pagan Druids. But all along the coast of Dublin, Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford and Limerick, the Danes or Ostmen had built seaport towns. The Irish themselves preferred to live in the country. In their native woods they felt secure. In their houses of wattle and clay they enjoyed at least domestic peace, and subsisted on the produce of their farms,

while the inhabitants of the towns were supplied with groceries and wines of Poitou by Danish and French merchants. A people of pastoral habits, they did not wear armour, but were simply clad in woollen garments. Cambrensis said the Irish wore woollen cloths, chiefly black, because the sheep of Ireland were mostly of that colour. They dressed like barbarians, wearing light cloaks, which spread over their shoulders and reached to the elbows, and were made of different textures and striped. Under these they wore linen shirts and breeches which ended in coloured shoes. When they took the oath to King John, the chiefs laid aside their girdles, skeans or daggers, and caps. King John plucked their beards, and tried to introduce English dress amongst them by having scarlet robes cut in the English fashion presented to the chieftains. But we find the Irish settlers adopting the dress of the Irish, and their manner of wearing the hair in glibbs or straight locks. The Statute of Kilkenny forbade the use of Irish dress and glibbs among the English of the Pale, "who adopted the Irish dress and looked on the long glibbs of the uncivilized people as their boast and ornament."

It is a remarkable fact that an Act was passed at Westminster in the 28th year of Edward III. encouraging Irish frieze and exempting it from ulnage or wool tax. The brog which the Irish wore was made of "dried skins of beasts, or half-tanned leather, fastened by a thong." A buskin, which was discovered in a bog in Queen's County, is thus described—"It is

made of raw skin with the hair turned outwards, is open before, but was intended when on the leg to be laced in front with thongs of leather. The sole appears never to have been thicker than the upper part."

The Irish, like the Gauls, preferred to fight naked. A Lord-Deputy writing to Henry VIII. after a description of the gallowglasses said—"the other sort, called Kernes, are naked men but only their shirts, and many times when they come to the bicker but bare naked." Their recreations in the field were the chase and horse-racing; while at home they enjoyed music, poetry and genealogy. Of their wit and wisdom there is abundant proof in the proverbs and moral reflections of the Irish sages. Of these some of the most remarkable are:—

The heaviest ear of corn is the one that lowliest bends its head.

He that conquers himself conquers an enemy.

It is better to be alone than in bad company.

Do not show your teeth when you cannot bite.

Better to come at the end of a feast than the beginning of a fight.

One debt won't pay another.

A promise is a debt.

Fear is worse than fighting.

An early description of one of the McMorroughs is worthy of quotation. It runs: "He was mounted on a

horse which cost him four hundred cows. His horse was fair, and in his descent from the hill to us, he ran as swift as any stagg, hare, or the swiftest beast that I have seen. In his right hand he bare a long dart, which he cast from him with much dexterity. He was tall of stature, well composed, strong and active. His countenance was fierce and cruel. He wore a light pink robe over his shoulders."

CHAPTER II.

CELTIC TYPES IN WALES.

THERE are also many connections—linguistic, national and historic—between Ireland and Wales, which are not generally known. But it is not surprising that this should be the case, when we remember that the ancient Irish and the ancient Britons previous to the Roman invasion were the same race. The Britons were driven from the east and centre of Britain to the western hills and cliffs, where they found security against the Saxon invaders in their mountain fastnesses, but still kept up constant intercourse with their Irish cousins. The native Irish and the native Welsh may be roughly regarded, therefore, as the representatives of the same Celtic, or rather Iberian, race. For the Iberian element is predominant in Wales, while the Celtic type prevails in Scotland. Ireland represents both types equally. We may accordingly expect to find some similarities, at all events, among these nations, pointing back to a common descent.

Taking up the language, not as experts, but as casual observers, we notice many words and turns of speech which are similar in both languages. For example, the Irish word for horse is capall, while the Welsh is ceffyl; the Irish for God is Dia, the Welsh is Duw; the Irish for black is dhuv, the Welsh is du.

Na is not in both languages. Ynys is Welsh for island, and inis, which occurs in so many names, as Inishbofin, Inishannon, is its Irish equivalent. Mor, which is found in Benmore, means great in Irish; and mawr, which occurs in Pen maen mawr, a hill near Llanfairfechan, means great in Welsh. Eglyws means church in Welsh; Eglish is church in Irish. These words seem to have a common source in the Latin Ecclesia, which again is derived from the Greek. Beann, which is found in the so-called Pins of Connemara, means peak, And this gave rise to the riddle—"Why have those pins no pints?" The answer to which is—"Because they are principally composed of quartz!" In Welsh the corresponding word is pen. Fionn or fin is fair in Irish. Gwyn is white in Welsh. Poll, which is found in Poulaphuca, means hole in Irish. Pwllwll means pool in Welsh, occurring in the well-known word—

Llanfairpwllgwynygllgogerchwyrndrobwlltysilisgogogoch,

which is the name of a small church on an islet in the Menai Straits, but is generally shortened into Llanfair. P. G.

It will suffice to add that gaber is Irish for goat, and gafar is Welsh, and that mac is Irish for son, and mab is Welsh. There is also a Kerry in Wales, near Montgomery.

A peculiarity common to the Welsh and Irish is to call places after churches and saints. The list of Irish

names beginning with Kil and Donagh (from the Latin Dominica) is legion, while in Welsh the list of words whose first syllable is Llan, pronounced tlan, with a guttural sound, and meaning holy land or church, are equally numberless. For example, Llanfair means the Church of Saint Mary, and Llangollen, the Church of St. Collen. This testifies to the piety of these ancient peoples.

As a rule, the Welsh are more friendly to the Irish than to the English. They feel that they are nearer to each other in several points. They have the same fluency of speech—more dramatic, perhaps, than the Irish, but not more persuasive. They are equally emotional and excitable, and they have something of the Irish friendliness and politeness. Their great passion is poetry and music, and the Bardic contests, with which ancient Erin was so familiar, are still kept up in the Welsh valleys and hills, and cause much excitement and amusement among the people. Every small town has its own Eisteddfod or competition, and the victorious bard is chaired amid much enthusiasm and ceremony, and presented with an elaborate address by the defeated competitors. In Plas Mawr, an Elizabethan house in Conway, there is a bardic stone on which Carmen Sylva, the poetic Queen of Roumania, stood, declaring that the privilege was hers, after her admission to the ancient order of the bards. A friend of the writer's, who was returning from Snowdon, was received with open arms by a Welsh bard, who declared that the Irish and Welsh were brothers. It

seems strange, therefore, that these nations have so little intercourse nowadays with each other.

Knowing the common ancestry of the Irish and Welsh, we are not surprised to find the same monuments in both countries. The Druid's Circle at Penmaen-mawr is one of the most remarkable ruins of this kind in the Principality. Its name has been given to it from its supposed connection with the Druids. It consists of eleven stones, some of them eight feet high, arranged in a circle. These stones are very weather-beaten, and evidently of great age. Between these, smaller stones are placed at intervals. This forms the inner circle, which is almost perfect. The outer is not so complete, and within this again there are traces of a still smaller circle, which is described by Mr. Longueville Jones in "Archaeologia Cambrensis" as "not concentric, but touching the inner circumference, as if it had been the foundation of a circular dwelling-house." The old idea that this was the sacrificial shrine of the Druids seems to have yielded to the now more generally accepted opinion that these remains are sepulchral, like New Grange and Knowth and Dowth, near Drogheda, the difference being that the mound has remained in the case of the latter, but has been removed in the case of the former, where the foundation stones alone remain. Sir John Wynn, who wrote in the seventeenth century, was of opinion that the Druid's Circle, or Meini Hirion, as it is called, was the place where the kings of ancient Britain pitched their tents when they were training their soldiers on

these mountains. Others of equally strong imaginations have discovered traces of blood on the largest stone in the circle, and have declared that it is the sacrificial stone of the Druids. To pass on to Christian remains, a visit to the Valle Crucis Abbey, near Llangollen, reminds one of the equally wonderful remains of the ancient Cistercian foundation at Mellifont, near Drogheda. The plans of both might be compared with advantage. And both monasteries were built in charming valleys, thus keeping up the record of the Clara Valla, Clairveaux, Bernard's foundation. In a field close by the Abbey in the Valley of the Cross stands a pillar some eight feet high, now called the Pillar of Elisse, but some regard it as a mutilated cross. It is interesting to find that the same religious orders were established in the same period both in Ireland and Wales, a fact that furnishes a proof of the popularity of Bernard, the founder of the Order, whose great friend was Malachy of Armagh. We now come to the military and social connections between Wales and Ireland. It is well known that the invaders of Ireland, previous to the English subjugation of this country were Welshmen. They were the descendants of Nesta, a Welsh princess, and consisted for the most part of Fitzstephens, Fitzgeralds, and Barrys. The expedition was accompanied by that famous Archdeacon, Giraldus Cambrensis, who eulogises his cousins, the Barrys, to the disparagement of Strongbow and his company. This Gerald of Wales wrote an interesting book on the Topography of Ireland, and another

on the Conquest of Ireland. Both works are to be accepted with the proverbial grain of salt.

But there are still more ancient connections between the Welsh and the Irish, in the story of which the famous Harlech Castle, now so well known through the "March of the Men of Harlech," and the Castell Dinas Brân, or Crow Castle, as the English call it, and Conway Castle, occupy prominent positions. In that ancient book, the "Mabinogion," it is said that Bran Bendigaid, or the Blessed, the son of Llyr, or Lear, a name familiar to all Shakespearian readers, was sitting upon the rock of Harlech when Matholwch, King of Ireland, came to woo his sister Branwen, married her, and took her back to Erin. Matholwch got into trouble on his return, and sent for Brân, who came to his assistance. But Bran was defeated, all but seven of his followers slain, and he himself was wounded with a poisoned dart. Near Harlech are some ancient ruins called Muriau Gwyddelod, or the Irishmen's walls, which may commemorate this event.

Another fort connected with this same Brân is Castell Dinas Brân, or the hill-fort of Brân, a rudely-built tower on a commanding eminence near Llangollen, where Brân kept his enemies at bay, and which he left in charge of his seven knights on his ill-fated expedition to Ireland. The story of Brân's head is given in the *Mabinogion*.

To come to Conway, with the noble structure of Edward I., and the ancient abbey founded by Llewellen the Great, we read of a fierce battle between the Welsh

and the English of the Marches over a vessel which had come from Ireland with a cargo of wine. The Welsh got the best of the fight, and eventually the ship with its wine fell into their hands, Again, it was undoubtedly due to his absence in Ireland that Richard II. lost his crown in England. There had been an insurrection in Ireland, and the King, who acted by fits and starts, suddenly roused himself, and having collected a great force, left his own shores, to which he was never to return as King again. For during his absence in the Green Isle Bolingbroke had returned from his exile, and had been joined by the most powerful nobles in the land. And when the King sailed in to Milford Haven, after leaving the greater part of his army to enrich the soil of Erin, he found that it was unsafe to land, and accordingly withdrew to Conway, where he entered into negotiations with his cousin, was allured to Flint Castle, and was surprised and seized by his enemies.

Passing on to the reign of Charles I. and the Civil War, we find the Irishmen taking a conspicuous part in the defence of Conway Castle, which was held by Archbishop Williams for the King. But after the capture of the castle by General Mytton these poor fellows, who fought for King Charles, were seized, tied back to back, and thrown into the river from the castle walls. After the restoration of King Charles II. this fortress was handed over to Edward Earl of Conway, who quietly dismantled the castle, and sent the timber, iron, and lead over to Ireland, which is thus connected

with several links, romantic and metallic, with the grand old castle of North Wales.

This much will suffice to show that the Celts of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, were branches of the same great race of Gaels or warriors. Even though they may have developed differently, owing to their different environments and circumstances, we find in all the same fundamental characteristics. And although they have been separated for centuries, they have still certain customs, traditions and sentiments in common, to which they show the same Celtic loyalty and by which their nationality is proven. In the following chapter an attempt will be made to describe the elements of ancient Irish society.

CHAPTER III.

ANCIENT CODES OF HONOUR.

THE first thing perhaps that would strike a modern student of ancient Irish story as strange is the tribal mode of life. There is nothing, however, uncivilised in the tribal system. It is simply a more primitive state of life than the national, and survived the storms of time until a much later period in Scottish history. When one has read a little about the customs of our early ancestors one cannot vote them altogether barbarians. In the first place, there were several large and independent tribes under their own chiefs, and each tribe was divided into several septs, each of which consisted of a number of families.

There was a chief of the tribe elected by the free and independent voters of that day—the freemen—and there was at the same time a minor chief of each sept in the tribe who was elected by the principal members of the sept. Thus we find that when Brian Boru was the chief of the Dalcasian tribe, Menma was chief of the Macnamaras of Clare, a sept of that tribe

Members of a tribe were bound by the closest ties to one another, frequently fighting side by side against common foes, often celebrating common victories and common festivals sacred and secular. They had many a bond of union, the nation has not, because of its more complex organisation.

It is said, too, that there was a certain community of goods. The tribe owned the land. Kings and chiefs held it only by virtue of their office. The chief was allowed a certain quantity of land and certain cesses and tribute from the freemen of his tribe. But he was expected to give hospitality to strangers, to supply the sinews of war, to repair roads, and give stock to the needy. He, therefore, must have found it hard at times to make both ends meet, especially in time of war, when he had to lead his men to battle and at the same time superintend the commissariat.

When a chief died the members of the tribe assembled to elect his successor. In this election they were influenced by qualities of valour and character as well as of birth. They always tried to get the fittest man, "the next in blood that was worthiest and fittest." In cases where two rival names were put forward and it was found hard to settle the matter without a conflict, the rivals were allowed to settle their claims by mortal combat—a very wise policy in such a system of life, when the safety of the tribe often depended on the popular rule of a single chief. When a chief was elected he nominated his most capable son as Tanist or substitute to take his place in battle, or in state when he was unable to be present in person. In the sept or sub-division of tribe there was a similar election of chief and Tanist. Under such a condition of things the home was naturally the centre of life; in fact, the tribe and sept were but larger editions of the family life.

The voice of the elected chief was supreme in cases of bad conduct. He was advised by a certain class of men called Brehons. These were the ancient lawyers of Erin. Their laws were not written, but handed down from one generation to another, and regulated every department of life. A candidate for admission into this select order had to serve an apprenticeship of twelve years. The Brehon laws are called natural laws, such as would naturally be formulated in a natural state of life like that of the tribe.

We might, therefore, expect that they would be superseded in a more artificial form of society. Several of these laws concerning the division of property, fosterage, and ordinary relations of life are very interesting. They show what an innocent but cultured people the ancient Celts were.

We can read these laws now, for after the introduction of Christianity, the Brehon laws were committed to writing after certain precepts had been expurgated which did not agree with New Testament teaching. "For the law of nature had been quite right, except the faith and its obligations, and the harmony of the Church and the people." This ancient code is called the "Senchus Mor."

It is supposed that these Brehon laws were the legal rules in force in the Aryan race before they came to Ireland. And they were preserved in their primitive form here because Ireland was left pretty much to herself by the Romans in early times. I will give you

a few examples to show what an elaborate and honourable code it was.

Take the "Law of Distress."

This was the principle on which damages could be recovered. In case of theft or loan not returned, the man whose property had been taken or not returned might serve a notice on the delinquent. And if this was not attended to he could then seize his cattle (for example), and put them in a pound. Then the matter would be brought before one of the Brehons, who always acted as arbitrators in such disputes. If the delinquent did not appear, the plaintiff would be awarded the cattle he had seized, and to this judgment the defendant had to submit without demur.

Now, there was no capital punishment recognised in the Brehon code. In case of murder, the murderer had to pay a heavy fine, or 'eric,' in compensation to the friends and relatives of the murdered man in order to remove any desire or ground for vengeance.

St. Patrick once demanded "life for life."

On one occasion, hearing that there was a plot to kill him, he dressed himself as a charioteer and drove, while the charioteer donned the robes of the saint. As they passed through a gorge, an arrow flew from behind a rock, and lodged in the breast of the charioteer, who fell dead to the bottom of the car.

St. Patrick demanded the life of the murderer.

The matter was referred to the chief Brehon, who decided that the murderer should die, or "pass to a new life in heaven," as the saint had predicted. The

Irish, however, refused to try the experiment, and declined to give up the life of their countryman. It was not until the reign of Elizabeth that capital punishment was introduced into Ireland. No wonder then that the people instinctively rebel against this inhuman practice.

To turn to more pleasant topics, there was a peculiar law called the *Bee-judgment*, which has no significance now. At one time, however, bees formed a staple industry in Ireland. Mead, the favourite drink, was made from honey, and every dish that required sweetening was sweetened by honey. Of course, this was all changed when sugar was introduced in the 16th century. Now, as the bees used to gather honey from the flowers that grew in the neighbouring fields, every three years the owner was compelled to give a certain portion of honey to the neighbours in lieu of the honey that had been extracted from their fields.

This one law shows the fine sense of justice the ancient Irish had. Again, according to the Brehon code, there was a certain allowance made for the poor and sick of the tribe, who were rightly considered to have a claim upon the strong and well-to-do. They had a public relieving officer for the poor and a public physician for the sick, both of whom were salaried by the community.

There is a quaint description of the relieving Brehon. He is humorously termed "a pillar of endurance," and naturally so, to judge from the character of his occupation. "One able to stand the reddening

of his face without insult to his tribe"—that is, able to stand the insolence of beggars without being put to the blush—such was the relieving officer in those days. The doctors, too, were people of importance. Some were called lawful and others unlawful. If they were authorised to take off a limb or cut a sinew without having to pay damages, even if they did it badly, they were considered duly qualified. But if they had not received this *diploma* they indulged their taste for surgery at their own expense. There was humour in this arrangement. When a man got ill he was carried at once to the doctor's house, and put under his treatment there and then. This house was generally built by a running stream, whence pure water could be procured. It had four doors, so that everything that was done within might be open to inspection; a door being at every quarter of the wind, so that the house might also be well ventilated. The open air cure is, therefore, no novelty in Ireland.

We read of hot baths being used for rheumatism, and of elaborate processes of shampooing. Keating, in his "History of Ireland" tells of a remarkable cure effected by one of these physicians some 200 years before St. Patrick's visit. A warrior was carried into the primitive dispensary with a broken spear head in the fleshy part of his thigh. The surgeon failed to extract it. At last he heated a ploughshare red hot in the fire, and rushed at the warrior, ordering him to show him the place. The poor fellow started up in a terrible fright, thinking the physician was going to

roast him alive. But the effort he made in jumping up was sufficient to force the splint up to the surface of the wound, and it was then easily drawn out.

No doubt that treatment was as effective in that particular case as the scientific methods of to-day. But I am sure we are thankful we are not left completely to the mercy of such irresponsible persons, whose skill was small and whose fees were great, being in proportion to the position of their patient. A bishop would have to pay 42 cows, while a horseboy would have only to pay two for the doctor's services.

We will now return to the family life. Community of goods was the basis of the family. They had all things in common. When a householder died, there was a redistribution of the goods among the sons, who each received an equal portion, according to the principle of Gavelkind. The dwellings were circular in form, and consisted of wickerwork covered with clay or earth, and were generally white, like the cottages of the country people to-day. The roof was made of dried rushes, sloping outwards from the centre.

Saint Baorthin was one day standing under a tree during a shower of rain, and as he watched the rain drops forming pools of water at his feet, he said, in a fit of inspiration—

> Of drops a pond is formed,
> Of rods a round house is built.

Families of the better classes lived in several of these little huts joined together and surrounded by a

palisade, a mound and a hedge. The apartments of the women were fenced off from the quarters of the men, who generally slept on beds of rushes arranged around the wall of the great dining hall. In the centre of this hall were the stove and the chimney piece, while on the walls were arranged the different weapons used in war and the chase, and the domestic utensils. Of these one may see some excellent specimens in the National Museum. There are bronze daggers, rapier blades, shields, and spears of beautiful finish and exquisite shape in that collection. There is also a large bronze caldron, in which venison was boiled, made of spherical plates joined together by small rivets; the handles are handsomely wrought rings, while the rim of the caldron is ornamented with a boss and trumpet-shaped designs. This relic has been assigned to the iron period. Another caldron even more beautiful, but not so well preserved, is of gold bronze. While such ornaments as these used to hang from pegs in the walls, the well-known distaff or spinning wheel stood in the corner of the room, along the sides of which we can imagine we see dark forms wrapt in their cloaks asleep, across whose hardy features a flickering ash now and then throws a faint glimmer.

These are the Celts, a race created for the game of war, whose powerfully-built and athletic frames were the admiration of the Roman historian. The chief is easily distinguished. He wears a gold gorget around his neck, and a chain of gold hangs from his silk tunic. Gold rings are on his fingers and gold bands adorn his

arms, while his cloak is fastened by a large ornamented pin, which has a handle and a blade of some dozen inches, showing what a formidable weapon Hamlet's "bare bodkin" must have been. Great spurs are strapped to his shoes of brown leather, for he is a famous horseman and breeder of horses like his present day representatives.

Next to him are ranged his most faithful retainers, men who fight and hunt by his side in the day, and at night hold the wassail together. These are principally Fenia or militiamen, who have sworn not to fly before nine, not to take a dowry with a wife, never to betray a friend or deny a stranger, or offer violence to a wayfarer. In fact, they are Ireland's Ancient Order of Chivalry, no less renowned than Arthur's Knights of the Round Table. Their hair is long and fair. Their dress consists of a woollen cape with hood, a tunic reaching to the knees, bound by a scarf folded round the waist, and tight-fitting pantaloons. They have no shoes. Such are the figures in the dining hall.

Passing out of this hall you enter the kitchen, which is well stored with venison and beef, fish and fowl, honey and milk, butter and beer. Leaving the house and going into the open air we notice that the dwelling places stand in a group, and are surrounded by a wide, deep trench flanked on the outer side by a mud wall, and on the inside by a blackthorn hedge. Across this hedge no stranger dare pass without the permission of the proprietor.

Once inside one of these family walls the blood-stained wretch was secure from punishment. The avenger dare not cross the hedge. Not that crime was winked at in those days, but because it was considered a matter of honour that the owner of the house should give up any criminal who sought refuge with him, "for he who let a criminal escape was considered a culprit."

Yet the sanctity of family abode was always so strong among the Irish that they often harboured, as they do still, criminals who threw themselves on the protection of their relations.

With regard to the inviolable wall that ran around the family penates, it is interesting to note that the law of trespass was extended to animals, so that if a young pig went through the fence a fine was inflicted on the owners, the hedge of thorny plants being expressly made "to stop every gap through which a dog or boar could thrust his head."

Particular pains were taken in making this hedge. Every member of the family was compelled to take his turn in the work. In order to have this carried out, it was arranged that each should give his food at night into the hands of others, so that he should not forget to go to the hedge for it in the morning, when the victuals of any person who did not come to the hedge for the day's work were consumed by the others with impunity.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CELTIC SOCIAL SYSTEM.

THE social system of the ancient Irish was a most intricate affair, and must have frequently exhausted the patience, and puzzled the brains, of the Brehons, who acted as heralds and registrars. The numerous cliques in the social life of our small community, of which strangers so bitterly complain, doubtless had their origin in the divisions of ancient Irish society. The principles of "fraternity, liberty, and equality" would have been even more revolutionary in the good old days of yore than they seemed when first proclaimed in imperial France. What would the free and independent voters of modern Ireland say to the seven distinct classes into which the Celtic tribes were divided, according to the Crith Gabhlach?

The organisation of the tribe seems to have been further complicated by the Danish invaders, who brought a more elaborate system of society, as well as more approved architectural designs, into the country. Their presence in the country certainly influenced the social life of the Irish by transforming the family life of the tribe more or less into a military system, and by compelling the tribes, who had been kept

separate by vanity, jealousy, and misrepresentation, to unite in self-defence. It is, however, as hard to say to what degree, and in what special way, this foreign influence worked as it is to describe in detail the constitution of the ancient Irish tribe, which was already in the course of disintegration when first it emerged into the light of history. At the outset, we may say that it is difficult for us Irishmen of the present day to conceive a state of society in which the individual had no rights, save as a member of his family, in which there was so small an element of property as hardly to qualify a man to say: "Who dare tread on the tail of my coat," and in which there was practically no government of any sort "to be against." The tuath or clan, consisting of people who had sprung from the same ancestor, was the political and social unit. Their bond of unity was blood, not land. This cohesion, based on consanguinity, could not be altered by removal or migration from one locality to another. There was little love of their native land in the hearts of the Irish Gaels. In this point they differ from many of us who love our dear, old Ireland. But they were deeply attached to their clan and the members of it. The family had no fixed residence in the earliest times, but, like the Dutch "trekkers," the ancestors of the Boers, they were generally on the move, of course within the territory of the tribe, as their cattle required fresh pasture, and as they themselves sought new hunting grounds. The

authority was accordingly vested in the father of the family, who, like the Arab sheik, was the patriarch of the establishment, and to whom every member owed obedience. In fact, their safety and welfare depended on their standing by members of the same body, and on their compliance with the directions of their common head. The household would not, however, be necessarily limited to the man, his wife, and his children, but like the Roman familia, and the Greek oikos, and the Jewish family, would embrace the servants and the slaves, the guests and the sojourners, the relations and armed retainers, who were living with them. Each of these—except the slaves—had their voice in the controlling of the family affairs, and while the constitution was patriarchal in principle, it became democratic in practice. For it was more independent of the father than a modern family is. Now-a-days, when a parent dies, his household is generally broken up, but no such result followed the death of the father of the ancient Irish family. They simply elected another—the most capable, not necessarily the eldest—of his blood relations to take his place, and everything went on just as before. But when land became acquired by the family, as it did in different ways, honest and dishonest, although in theory all land was common, a new system was put into operation, which had the effect of largely extending the family interest. It was called the Geilfine, from Gilla, the five fingers of the hand, and it worked in this way:—If the man

who acquired the land had as many as five sons, he planted out each of them, as they grew up to be men, in a household of their own, giving them their portion of his property, until he came to the fifth, whom he kept with him as the heir of the original home. Thus the Geilfine, or group of five families, was constituted. Then the youngest, in his turn, planted out his sons upon the residue of his inheritance, keeping the youngest again to be their particular heir. Thus another Geilfine came into being, which was called the Deirbhfine, or "particular group." The process was repeated, and the Iarfine, or "after group," was formed, and then, for the fourth time, a Geilfine was formed, which was the Indfine, or "end group." The reader will notice that there were seventeen households established by this means—four groups of four and the original home. No further subdivisions of land was made after this; but each household became, in its turn, a new centre of four groups, until the number 17 was again reached, and then a fresh start was made. In this system we see how the tribe, in the original sense of the term, was constituted. Bound together by mutual rights and obligations, joining in common worship, and having all things common at the first, the family laid the foundation for that wider, though looser, unit, the tribe, which, in its turn, with many other tribes, helped to form the State.

In the tribe the families were represented by the heads of the households when they met together to

discuss any important question. The direct descendants however, of the original heads of these houses constituted a select class, who exercised certain priestly and military functions in virtue of their high descent, and from these the chief was generally selected. At first the different families, say of the O'Connors, even after the tribe had been fully organised, settled their private arguments among themselves, and seldom or never called in the tribe to adjudicate upon their family quarrels. New developments of the tribe arose when it went forth to conquer their neighbours. In the conquered district the victorious tribe were planted, each family receiving, like the Cromwellians of later days, a due proportion of ground. We have here the germ of the landed aristocracy. Moreover, as a large number of the defeated tribe were taken prisoners, and their wives and children, by the newcomers, and as the refugees from the other tribes were naturally received into the service to swell the ranks of the powerful families, most frequently, indeed, of the chiefs themselves, we begin to notice the growth of political power, family influence, and personal wealth—new factors in the onward march of the tribe. For, while the weaker families of the same tribe who were originally on the same footing as the others, sank in the social scale, the numerically stronger would rise in the same proportion.

The principal chief, with his bodyguard of warlike retainers, would stand at the head; then came the

great chiefs and their armed followers; then the smaller chiefs and their families, then the free classes and at the very bottom of the social scale were found the crowd of people who had no civil rights or privileges, although the great majority of them had been the original settlers in the land. But, by degrees, the social life of the tuath became more complicated, as the element of wealth began to enter largely into the consideration of rank, and as the tuath or tribe, by the addition of other tuaths, began to grow into a small kingdom in which the original freemen of the original tuath were gradually reduced to a position of serfdom or absorbed among the unprivileged class. The Brehons made an elaborate classification of society, according to scale, of which it will be sufficient to give a very bare outline. It appears that the people who resided on the tribe land—which is generally co-extensive with the modern barony— were divided into two principal classes—the Neme and the Feini, the former consisting of those who had a position in the community and the privileges of freemen, the others composed of those less fortunate members of society who had neither rank nor position nor privilege in the tribe. We find a near parallel to these orders in the Roman classification of Patricians and Plebeians, which was, indeed, common to all the Aryan nations.

The higher order, again, was further sub-divided into several classes. The lowest of these consisted of men who had a dwelling-house and a portion, no

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matter how small, of the tribe land. If a farmer had a small farm with ten cows he rose one step in the social scale, and if he managed to acquire more stock and was able to keep a few retainers he climbed up the social ladder again and became a noble, a "flaith," having been an "aire" before.

The manner in which the higher classes of the community extended their influence over the poorer, considering the primitive stage of society, was highly ingenious. We must remember that the object desired by the "flaith" order was not merely wealth, but power. And their plan was this. A man's wealth consisted in the number of cows he possessed. There was, however, only a certain amount of the tribe land available for each member. Accordingly, the wealthiest cowowners adopted the expedient of hiring out cows to the poorer graziers, who were glad to have the cattle, for several reasons, pecuniary and social. But the conditions of the loan were worthy of the modern Jew and the ancient Roman, for, if the debtor could not pay his debt he became the vassal of his creditor, whose influence was thus increased by an addition to the number of his retainers. It was in this way that the powerful class of "lords" arose, who claimed to have the right of coshering upon their tenants, from each of whom they exacted free quarters and support for a certain number of days on their hunting or warlike expeditions. There was, indeed, much to be condemned in the treatment the wealthier classes

gave the poorer in those times, which are so often spoken of as the golden age of Erin. For they often compelled them, even against their will, to take their cattle on their own harsh terms, in order that they might have a safe investment at the risk of their weaker brethren, at whose freedom they thus aimed a deadly blow, with a view to their own aggrandisement. For it was the acquisition of these personal rights over their debtors that constituted the distinction of the "flaith" or highest order of the community. The lowest class of "flaiths" was called the airè-desa, *i.e.*, a free man who had the right of hiring out cattle. And, naturally enough, in their desire to rise higher, they all took advantage of this law, which oppressed the poor.

It is commonly but wrongly supposed that property formed the only basis of rank among the Irish, for though there was a fixed property qualification for the higher grades, unless that property was retained through three successive generations—grandfather, father, and son—the rank was lost. It was that custom, no doubt, which gave rise to the familiar saying that "it takes three generations to make a gentleman." The Geilfine system, which has been explained, was, doubtless, invented to meet this regulation by securing the retention of the property in the family.

The privileges of the community, which were enjoyed by the upper classes of "flaiths" and "airès" and were denied to the lower class of "feini," consisted

of sitting in the assembly, of giving asylum, and of representing those under their protection. Here was another means cleverly devised by the more influential members of the community for extending their power. For it stands to reason that the tie between them and their retainers, who could not even sue a member of the higher order who had injured them, unless accompanied by their patron, was bound to become a very close one indeed.

The law of evidence also bore heavily upon the members of the lowest class. For their testimony was not accepted. It was these laws and customs that helped to break up the unity of the tribe and kingdom. And while the great man, with his vassals and retainers, who consisted largely of foreign mercenaries, refugees, and the original inhabitants of the land, oppressed the poorer members of his own tribe, the latter were compelled to combine for protection. And thus there arose a system of guilds in the land. Guild, said to come from a Celtic word giall, signifying pledge. A guild meant a co-partnership in labour. According to the Brehon law, guilds were for the mutual benefit and assurance between co-partners. The candidate for membership in a guild had to pledge himself that the responsibility of the body should be his. The people of the lower ranks were thus rendered more secure against their political enemies, and their own political status was raised. For example, with regard to the giving of testimony—a right denied to the

poorest man individually—several poor men by combining together could qualify one of their guild to represent each member of the guild in a law suit. By this method, artisans, handicraftsmen, and poor graziers had some one to represent them individually, and to see that they were not wronged by the richer members of society. And by this system the personal rights of the poorest were secured, and trade and labour were protected from the tyrannical encroachments of the chief and his alien crowd of fighting men, on the one side, and from the cruel oppression of the wealthy on the other. But it is easy for anyone to see at a glance that the elements of disruption were even now at work in the State. For a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Between the chief, supported by his foreigners, or fuidhirs, and the wealthyclasses, backed by their retainers and vassals, the labouring class came to the wall, and the tribe soon followed them. For even the mighty power of Rome was undermined, and went under when it allowed such an absurd and cruel state of affairs to exist. From a glance at the constitution of ancient Irish society we may safely infer that the greatest pledge of welfare and prosperity that our country possesses at the present hour lies in the protected and improved condition of the working and farming classes.

CHAPTER V.

ANCIENT IRISH SOCIETY.—THE CHIEF.

THE Irish Chief was a very important personage. It was true that he did not own the land, but he had certain rights which prescriptive use had made his inheritance. Of these one was the privilege of *coshering* on his people, who were bound to support him and his followers with a certain number of meals or for a specified number of days when on marauding or hunting expeditions. What had originally been wrested from the clansmen by force became in the course of time a gracious concession. For the common people were glad to welcome their chief under their roof no matter whether he would eat them out of house and home or not. They rejoiced to spend and be spent in such a cause. So much so that the saying "*Devour me, but defend me*" passed into a proverb.

This national custom was greatly opposed by the Government, which perceived to what excesses and unlawful relations it might lead, and what obstructions it might offer to the peaceful settlement of the country. Indeed, it often happened that an outlawed chief could not be found or hunted to earth so long as he had a single follower to give him the shelter of his cabin and the security of his hearth. Archbishop King speaks

of the number of Irish gentlemen who, though dispossessed of their lands, hovered about their ancient inheritance, receiving board and lodging from their former tenants, or joined the bands of *Tories* who roamed over the country, striking a blow wherever they could against the new settlers. This custom of *coshering* on their dependents created a mutual understanding and good will between the follower and his chief, and, while it helped the former to respect himself and to carry himself with deference, but without servility, to his betters, it often paved the way for a deeper union between the tribesman and his lord, who very often married the daughter of a clansman. Hence it was that when the English came to Ireland they were principally struck by the independent, though courteous, air of the tribesmen in the presence of their chiefs, at a time when the Englishmen of the same position in life were regarded by their masters as dogs and churls. But this difference of manner between the peasants of England and the peasants of Ireland in the olden days has an explanation which it is only fair to our English cousins to give. While the Irish Prince and his native followers—not speaking of the mercenaries—were of the same blood and race, the Saxon thane was completely different in nationality and religion from the poor Briton he had crushed by his cruelty and debased by his tyranny. Driven out of his country and forced to flee into the mountains of Wales, the Christian Briton determined

that he would not spread the truths of his religion among his oppressors, for 'why should he lead the souls of those who had ruined him to salvation?' So he reasoned. It was, therefore, left to the Irish to convert the Saxons to Christianity.

Another custom of the Irish which helped to consolidate the forces of the tribe was *fosterage*. The sons of the chief were settled among the families of the tribe, given out to be trained and fostered by them. Thus the young chief would grow up in the bosom of his people, who loved their foster children as dearly as they loved their own, and bequeathed to them a child's portion. For this privilege of wardship they were not paid in the case of the son of a chief, but *they had to pay*. Campion tells us that commonly 500 kine and better were given to win a nobleman's child to foster. In the records of the Earls of Kildare we read long lists of the gifts of the Irishry to foster with that family. We cannot estimate too highly the advantage of this custom to the tribe and the chief. The clansmen got to know and love him whom they had taught to be swift and fearless in the chase, and they followed him with confidence to battle, while the chief had formed many an attachment among the ranks of those whom he was called upon to lead and govern. Many and many a time did his foster-brethren form a bodyguard for their chief through which the enemy could not break save over their dead bodies. Many and many a time did the

chieftain's band hew out a path of safety for a wounded foster-brother in the madness of the contest.

But it is not to be imagined that this custom of *fosterage* was confined to the sons of the chief. It was the general method of education and training for the young. Suppose we allow our imaginations to travel back to the sixth century, and ask what system of discipline was then in vogue for the young. The reliable histories of the nation and books on its national life answer that there was, considering the times, a very elaborate and judicious method of education in use. The father and mother of the child would first settle in their minds what friend of theirs would take the best care of the boy and teach him all he required to know, and, at the same time, not allow him to forget his parents. Then, one fine morning, they, with some of their relations, would go to the house of this friend and solemnly make over the boy to his care, giving him all responsibility over the child, and permission to deal with him as he thought fit. And then they would retire, leaving their son with his new guardian. On that day, or the following, the lad of tender years would be introduced to life and labour. In the company of his foster parent he would be brought to the fields and shown the ground which he would have to learn to till. The cattle which he would have to herd would be pointed out to the boy "all tears." Then he would see the wild colts he would have to break in; the kilns in which he would have to

work, and the forests he would have to clear. The foster parent would then bring him back to the house and point out the domestic duties he would be required to perform, the wool he would learn to dress, and the weapons he would be taught to wield. And, as soon as would be convenient, the lad would be brought to the bard of the neighbourhood, who would be engaged to teach him the poetry, history, and music of his people. As the bard was a very important person, one who was associated by his office with the loftiest traditions and highest circles of the land, a brief digression on this subject will be permitted.

The bard was one of the privileged members of the community. His office was hereditary, and he had not merely to sing the history of his tribe and nation, but he had to teach it. In those early days, when writing was almost unknown, or a difficult accomplishment, the memories of men retained the folk-lore of the land which the bards were the means of handing down from father to son. It was in this way that the great poems, or collection of poems, which have been attributed to Homer, were preserved. As the Homeridæ, or school of poets, collected and revised the stories of their race enshrined in matchless verse, so the bards of Erin passed along the line of generations the poetical traditions of their people.

The Irish were a song-loving if not a musical race, and their national bards kept alive the ancient spirit of their forefathers by their stirring melodies of

the great and glorious past, when the Scots went forth from the northern shores to conquer Alba and to stay the Roman advance beyond the Tweed, when the virtue and piety of the race were a sufficient pledge for the safety of woman and child, and when the harp never vibrated to any but strains of valorous deeds and suffering nobly borne. It was the invincible inspiration of these martial and manly airs the invaders sought, and vainly sought, to suppress by their edicts against the bards, who represented the spirit of the nation, as they gave utterance to its mighty strivings and emotions. The same cruel policy was carried out in Wales, and the voice of the national bard was choked lest it should continue to fire the spirit of the vanquished race. But the harp of Tara was still voiceful as of yore. The spell of silence had not yet fallen upon its tuneful strings, and Giraldus, the Welshman, who had often heard the slow and measured strains of the same instrument on the Cambrian hills around Brecknock, records his astonishment at the wondrous skill of the Irish harper, and the wild gaiety of his tunes. But the Irish bard was a warrior as well as a singer. He buckled on his sword, and led the way to perish or conquer in the front of the battle, as Moore describes in his well-known lines :—

> " The minstrel boy to the war is gone,
> In the ranks of death you'll find him,
> His father's sword he has girded on
> And his wild harp slung behind him."

Such was the man to whom the literary education of the lad was entrusted, and we may rest assured that it was in safe keeping. Judged by its tendency to produce the end required—namely, a fine-spirited and industrious, a useful and chivalrous man, the education of that day can compare not unfavourably with that of our National Board.

After some years the parents would return for their son, and if they found that the foster-parent had faithfully fulfilled his duties, they gave him a handsome present according to their means, from three to sixteen cows. But if they did not consider, after examination, that his education had been sufficiently looked after, they brought him straight to the Brehon, the judge, who put the boy through his facings, and if he found that he had not been instructed properly, inflicted a fine upon the foster parent, which was immediately handed over by the Brehon to the lad, because on him the injury of want of learning had been inflicted. The sons of the wealthier classes were not taught manual labour, but riding, swimming, hunting, and chess-playing, accomplishments which tended to make them sociable as well as dexterous, courteous as well as courageous. Their training in military exercises was somewhat elaborate, and they "were allowed a horse to ride in the time of races." But in later years they were instructed in Latin, Greek, and Celtic literature.

There was the very same arrangement for the girls as for the boys. They were handed over to foster-

parents when very young, and left to the really tender mercies of the matron of the establishment, who looked after them and fitted them to fulfil their social functions and domestic duties with appropriate grace. And this she was capable of doing, as she was selected from among the members of the same social class to which the parents of the girl belonged. While the poorer maidens were taught to churn and knead—in fact, to be useful housekeepers; those belonging to a higher station in life were instructed in embroidery and the loom, and so were fitted to adorn the homes of the proud chieftains, in the management of which they had an equal voice. This method of education strikes us as being simple and effective. Children as a rule are more easily trained by kind strangers than by indulgent parents. And this tie between the children and their guardians became very strong, and so had a great influence in binding the members of the clan together by the very closest bonds of friendship.

It is interesting to note that the education question was always paramount in Irish circles. As early as 574 A.D. we find the King of Ireland presiding over a council of chiefs and noblemen which was convened to arrange a course of studies for the different schools, a primitive form, no doubt, of the present National Board, which has done so much good for the children of our country.

The Irish chief was not only an educated gentleman, at a time when the commonest Irishman, as

Prendergast well said, had something in him of the gentleman—he was a hospitable and courteous host. He rejoiced in dispensing hospitality. To refuse to do so were in his eyes a breach of honour, to be punished in another. Kincora, the residence of Brian Boroihme, was proverbial for the lavish entertainment offered to the passing stranger. "Go over to the great feast in the dun," they would say to him who approached, "the head of the weir." A characteristically Irish record of the *ceade mille failthe* there extended is preserved in the Munster welcome. "Were mine the boire of the Dane or the wine of Kincora, it would be poured out for you." Richard Stanihurst, in his account of his doings in Ireland, relates that he used to see the crowds assembled to hear the judgment of the Brehons delivered under some ancient tree or from some historic stone, and as they dispersed, they followed the chiefs who had invited them to supper, in long lines, down the hill and says that he was the proudest chieftain who brought home the greatest number of guests. This lavish hospitality has been carried down to our own day by the county families of Connaught, whose improvident generosity has in many cases brought their property into the Encumbered Estates Court. Indeed, it was the principal duty of the chief to keep up his position by doing the honours of the tribe. Debarred from every menial or plebeian office, such as gardening or working in the fields, his life must have been a very monotonous one, when not

engaged in fighting or plundering his neighbours, but for the social functions he had to perform, as the Brehons relieved him of the judgment of the people. Some of these functions were not unpleasant. In the Crith Gablach, *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, we read—"There are seven occupations in the 'Corus' law of a king, viz.—Sunday, for drinking ale, for he is not a lawful chief who does not distribute ale every Sunday; Monday, for judgment, for the adjustment of the people; Tuesday, at chess; Wednesday, seeing greyhounds coursing; Thursday, at marriage duties; Friday, at horse racing; Saturday, at giving judgments."

We still find the Irish as keen as ever on the drinking and dispensing of ale and stronger stuff, which might be used with more moderation, and on the coursing of greyhounds, horse-racing, and litigation, but we regret to find the game of chess is not pursued with the same enthusiasm as of old, when it was considered part of a gentleman's education. It is not often found that Irishmen quarrel over a game of chess, except in local tournaments. But if it was a woman who fanned the flames of the terrible invasion that found its catastrophe on the level sands of Clontarf, the match was held to it by a game of chess. Maelmordha, King of Leinster, of Glen Mama (near Dunlavin) fame, was bringing three masts of pine to Cenn Coradh, or Kincora, as tribute to Brian, but in the effort to get them over the hills Maelmordha's tunic burst. When he arrived at the head of the weir

he gave it to his sister, Gormfhlath, who was Brian's wife at the time, but instead of mending it she threw it into the fire, saying that he ought to be ashamed of being a vassal of Brian. The chieftain was naturally roused by his sister's words, and as he stood next day in the famous dun at Kildalua, or Killaloe, he watched Murchadh, the man who had found him in a yew tree and dragged him a prisoner to his father Brian, playing a game of chess with his cousin Conaing. Interested in the contest, Maelmordha advised Conaing to make a move which checkmated his adversary, who turned savagely upon him saying, "It was thou gavest advice to the foreigners when they were defeated." "I will give them advice again," said the other "and they shall not be defeated." "Have a yew tree ready," cried Murchadh, and Maelmordha fled never to return to Kincora (Wars of the Gaedhill and the Gaill).

It is time now to say a few words about the rights and status of the chief among his clansmen. First and foremost, he was in virtue of his office entitled to a portion of the tribe land and to the largest share in the plunder. Of course, the ruling family from which the chief was duly elected, although not necessarily the eldest son, would have acquired, in addition to its portion, large estates of the unoccupied land. For while the land, as a general principle, was common property, in reality the rights of pasturage possessed by the poorer people who could not afford to stock

their fields and had to hire cattle from the wealthier classes, used to pass into the hands of the rich, "the flaith" class, when the borrowers could not pay. And in many cases when the debtor had received his honour price, which was equivalent to his legal value as a free man of the tribe, he became the vassal and often the retainer of his chief. In this way the latter had become a wealthy potentate, being in a position to hire out more cattle, and to keep more servants and feini, or followers, than other members of his class.

The principal foundation of his power in the tribe he represented rather than ruled, for he could be deposed if he displeased the community lay in the possession of this land, upon which he had quartered his followers, who were most frequently fugitives from other tribes or foreigners who had no political status or voice in the Government. These men helped him to overawe the truculent members of his tribe and to force from them the necessary supplies. While in appearance the chief was a popular ruler, the representative of the will of his people, he became in process of time a petty tyrant from living in constant dread of assassination. A passage in Crith Gablach throws a light on the arrangement of his house, which was generally a strongly fortified but clumsy dwelling. We learn from it how true it was of the Irish chief that

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

Around the king, on either hand, in front and

behind, stood four guards, men without kith and kin, who owed their life and freedom to the chief, and whose fidelity was thought to be secured by some act of crowning mercy, and to be proof against treason. But the guards who had been saved from punishment, and who had not been taken in battle, lest "they might lay hands on the King or slay him out of devotion to their own tribe chief," were not completely trusted. They were watched by some prominent hostage whose property was a security for his good behaviour, while at the north-east of the room were posted the unredeemed hostages in chains—whose lives would be instantly taken if any treachery became apparent. On the right of the King sat his wife, his brehon, and his guests, and harpers, while on the other side stood his jugglers, flute-players and horn-blowers. More guards are stationed at the door, and there is also the champion and a "man of deeds," armed to keep order, or, as it is written, "against the confusion of the ale-house." But, in spite of this protection, the chief was often assassinated even in his own hall by a rival, or a member of a hostile tribe.

The conclusion of our study of the life and manners of the Irish gentleman of bygone centuries must be after this sort, that, while we cannot but admire his many virtues and qualities of heart, head, and physique, we are thankful that our lot has been cast under a quieter and less warlike rule

CHAPTER VI.

THE FAIR SEX OF ANCIENT ERIN.

IT is our pleasing duty now to describe the fair ladies of Erin, whose bright eyes rained influence upon the social gatherings and brave deeds of the sterner sex. It were a stupid platitude to say that then, as ever, Ireland had much cause to be proud of her lovely representatives. Indeed, it is a well-known fact that the English invaders would have never gained a footing in the land had they not been smitten by the dark eyes of Erin's daughters. If Greece took captive her fierce conqueror—the unflinching Roman, by the magic of her art and song, it is doubly true that captive Ireland subdued the hardy Normans and Flemings by the grace and charm of her freeborn damsels. For we here notice a difference in the manner in which the new-comers approached the Irish women from the customary arrogance of invaders. It was in honourable marriage they sought their brides, and it was only in honourable marriage that the Irish maidens were given by their fathers and brothers to the so-called "Saxons," who had lost both country and character through their relations with the Northmen from France. Strongbow was induced to invade Ireland by the promise of being married to the beautiful Eva, the famous Princess of Leinster. Richard de Burgho, the

MacWilliam Eaghter of Galway, was wedded to the attractive Nora, daughter of Murrough O'Madden, of Portumna, and the Geraldines of Kildare were intermarried with the ladies of the O'Connor sept. No wonder that the Irish were always proud of their women, whom they allowed to have an equal voice with themselves in the controlling of their households, and who, instead of being kept in seclusion, like their contemporaries the daughters of the English nobles, enjoyed a great amount of freedom and power. And, the consequence of this was, that the Irishman became gallant and courteous, from constant association with the ladies of the land.

At a time when women were sentenced to be publicly stripped and flogged by judges in England, an insult to an Irish woman, not to speak of such an indignity to her person, were mortal crimes. This fact has been immortalised in Moore's sweet song—"Rich and Rare were the Gems She Wore."

A warrior queen has been no novelty in our land. Scota, Queen of the Milesians, like an ancient Joan of Arc or Boadicea, arose to rally her defeated clansmen against the Tuatha-de Denans. She led her people to battle, and terribly did she fight. Though she failed to stay the career of the foe, she died and gave her name to the land, for our island was called Scotia long before it was known as Hibernia. In the eleventh century we resumed the name of Eire, which sometimes appears as Erin, and more generally

as Ireland. Roman writers bear witness to the great respect in which the women of the Celts were held.

The celebrated palace of *Emania*, known to the Irish as Eamhiun (Aven), and, by the addition of the Irish article "an," contracted to "n," converted into Navan, owed its foundation to a princess, *Macha of the golden hair.* The circumstances are given in the Book of Leinster. It appears that three kings agreed to reign in succession for a period of seven years. But after the death of the first, Aedhruadh, his daughter insisted to reign in his turn, but was opposed by the second son, Dihorba, whom she defeated in many battles, and, after his death, she married the sole survivor, Kimbay. There were still five of Dihorba's sons living, but captives. These Macha was advised to kill. "Not so," answered she of the golden locks, "because it would be the defilement of the righteousness of a sovereign in me; but they shall be condemned to slavery, and shall raise a rath around me, and it shall be the chief city of Ulster for ever." "And she marked for them the dun with her brooch of gold from her neck," and the place was called Eomuin, from eo (a brooch), and muin (the neck). This derivation may not be correct, but who can deny that it is ingenious? It was not an infrequent occurrence for two rival queens to lead their armies against each other. In Kilquane, portion of the Lambert estate near Craughwell, is found an ancient burial place, where is a stone which is supposed to

be raised to the memory of Norah, queen of Connaught, who had been slain in battle with the queen of Munster, and who can forget Queen Maeve of Rathcrochan ?

As we skip the centuries we come to one whose name is a household word in Ireland. Who has not heard of and admired the romantic Grace O'Malley, Granuaile, the great queen of the West? The life and fortunes of "*Grace of the heroes*" have been described in verse by Dr. Panter, who has done ample justice to the fair virgin who dominated the land by force of character in his epic poem. She was, as he says, "notable for her powerful frame, her ardent love of rule, and for success in such naval and military exploits as the piratical and tribal wars in her neighbourhood afforded." It is said that the Galway chieftainess visited the Court of Elizabeth and interviewed her great rival in England. And the Irish Amazon was rebuked by "Gloriana's self." On the return voyage the Irish princess is wrecked, and her ship is cast upon Ben Edar's shore, attracting at once a host of wreckers, who were, however, dispersed by Grace's warlike arm. Then the hospitality of Howth Castle was sought by the shipwrecked mariners, but was flatly refused. Some days pass, and the sails of Grace's scattered fleet are seen above the horizon, and enter the haven. Then the fierce soldiers are landed, and proceed to avenge the insult to their queen. The

youthful heir of St. Lawrence—who was found on the shore—is carried off by the enraged princess, and is only returned by Grace on the condition that the gates of the castle be opened at midday, and an extra plate be laid for any chance guest at the dinner hour.*

Another century of storm and sunshine has passed over the grave of the heroic Grace, and Lady Offaly is besieged in her castle at Geashill by the insurgents of 1641. Henry Dempsey, her own kinsman, summoned her to surrender, but "with the rebels she could make no common cause, and with the defection of the Lords of the Pale she could have nc sympathy." With smart repartee she defeated the arguments, and by vigorous measures the widow of sixty years foiled the enemy's attacks on her stronghold. The climax was reached when a piece of cannon which had been constructed with great labour by the besiegers burst in pieces, and, instead of demolishing the walls of the castle, scattered and dismayed their own troops. When her son was taken prisoner and a threat was sent to his mother that he would be instantly beheaded in front of the castle walls unless she surrendered, she promptly replied that she would have a notable prisoner of hers hurled from the ramparts if they dared to touch a hair of her son's head.

* According to a recent writer, Mr. H. T. Knox, the fame of Grace has been greatly exaggerated, and the seizure of the heir of Brann-Edair the exploit of Richard O'Cuairsai of Tirawley, which is described by Dugald MacFirbis, is wrongly attributed to her.

It is gratifying to learn that this brave lady was at last relieved by Philip Sydney from the distressful siege she had endured with heroic fortitude and strength of will. But it is not alone her high-spirited daughters who have shed lustre on Irish annals, for in her saintly women the land has been greatly blessed. Of these, St. Brigid of Kildare is perhaps the best known. She it was who became the foundress of the "Church of the Oaks," and the monastery where monks and nuns lived under the same roof. And so the Irish princess became a Christian saint. Another holy woman was St. Ite, the Brigid of Munster, whose name is supposed to survive in Killeady. The great work of the Christian Evangelists was thus ably seconded by their fair and noble sisters.

The Irish maidens of high degree were taught music, embroidery, and weaving, and their education received careful attention; but, above all things, they were trained up to be good mothers and devoted wives. On many an occasion a clan was saved and a chieftain reformed by the good offices of a woman. It was due to the piety of Lady Mary O'Connor, wife of Brian, who was involved in the rebellion of "Silken Thomas," that the last scion of the house of Kildare, the ancestor of the present Duke of Leinster, was brought up safely in the wilds of Offaly, where the O'Connor's held sway. As wife and mother, the Irish women would compare very favourably, then as now, with the women of any other country.

Although it would seem that marriages might be dissolved by personal arrangement, the fact that there were no laws for divorce testifies to the comparatively high morality of the Irish wife. It is true that the Irish chieftain often formed attachments of a loose nature, but such were not countenanced by the law of the land. On two occasions a woman was the cause of foreign invasion of Ireland. Kormlada, once the mistress of Brian Boroihme, and the mother of Sigtrygg, king of Dublin, was "so grim against King Brian after their parting that she would fain have him dead," and she gave Sigtrygg—who had married a daughter of Brian—no peace until he summoned his allies from Norway to help him to make war on Brian. But nothing could shake the loyalty of Brian's daughter to her father's cause. For it is recorded in the wars of the Gaedhill with the Gaill that as King Sigtrygg watched the battle from his tower, he exclaimed, when he saw Brian's men yield before Sigurd's Orkney men: "Well do the foreigners reap the field. Many a sheaf do they cast from them." But she replied: "The result will be seen at the end of the day." But when the shadows of evening were stretching over the sands of Clontarf the Danes began to retire to their ships, and Brian's daughter observed: "It seems to me that the foreigners have gained their patrimony." "What meanest thou, woman?" retorted the irate Dane. "Are they not rushing into the sea, which is their natural inheritance?" said she.

"I wonder are they mad, like cattle. If so, they tarry not to be milked," and the king smote her on the face.

A century rolls away, and Dermot MaeMurrough, the truculent king of Leinster, steals the heart and person of Dervorgil, and arrayed all Ireland and most of his own people, who had been estranged by his cruelty and licentiousness, against himself. In his desperation the wretched man went to the English Court and offered to hold his kingdom as the subject of the king of England if he would help him to recover his dominions. At the time the suppliant came to him Henry II. had his hands full of foreign affairs, but he gave Dermot a letter to bring round the country, and the letter succeeded in winning to his side some of the Norman barons who resided in Bristol and in Wales and were out of favour at Court, a desperate and a fearless band.

The lady who had been the guilty cause of this war, after her husband and her lover had been reconciled by death, retired from the pleasures of the world to the seclusion of the abbey at Mellifont, where she spent the remainder of her days in penitence and prayer. At Cluain-mic-Nois (Clonmacnois) is an ancient building called the "Church of the Nuns." It is recorded that in 1167 "the Church of the Nuns," at Cluain-mic-Nois, or the field of the son of Nos, was finished by Dearvorgail, daughter of O'Melaghlin. "Such," remarks the historian Gerald of Wales, "is

the variable and fickle nature of women, by whom all the mischief in the world is caused, as may be seen in the ruin of Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony) and the destruction of Troy." For, "Like another Helen, she fired another Troy."

There seems to have been a remarkable princess in Offaly called Ettagh, who has bequeathed her name to that place and her head to Kinnitty (Ettagh's head), She, no doubt, was conspicuous for something in her life, After her husband had been duly selected in a hurling match, or by some other method, the marriage of the Irish girl of humble station was celebrated with much festivity. The first of August was a favourite day for weddings in Meath. Then was held a great fair at Teltown, between Navan and Kells, called Taillten by its founder, Lewy of the long hand, one of the Tuatha De Danaan kings, after his foster-mother, Taillte. And there is the particular place, still called Laganeany, or the hollow of the fair, where the marriages were duly celebrated.

Dancing—which has ever been one of the favourite amusements of the people—was then the principal recreation for the young people of both sexes on all occasions of rejoicing. Under a bush or on a stone sat the musician, while around before him flitted the merry people, to the rhythmical measures of his inspiriting airs. There is a piper's stone near Knockbarron, in Kinnitty parish.

There is only space now to speak of one custom

which distinguished the Irish mothers from those of other nations. They never bound their children in swaddling clothes, but preferred, in this as in most things, to follow nature. Giraldus, the Welsh historian of Ireland, remarks that the Irish nurses never raised the baby's nose, pulled his face, or swathed his tiny limbs. And he declares that the result justified the wisdom of the Irish, for their sons and daughters grew up all the more tall and handsome because the unnatural custom of binding the babes in swaddling clothes was unknown in the land. This testimony of the Welshman of a thousand years ago to the fine physique and good appearance of the sons and daughters of Erin was confirmed in the writer's hearing by a German American who had travelled far and wide, and who declared he had never laid his eyes on a finer body of men than the members of the Royal Irish, or on a more charming race of women than the Celtic. Many natural causes have, no doubt, helped to bring about this good result, among them heredity, climate, the survival of the fittest, and the mixture of the best; but not the least is the principle referred to by Giraldus, and which rules the Irish woman's manners and regulates her dress and appearance, namely this—that "Nature unadorned 's adorned the most."

CHAPTER VII.

THE ANCIENT IRISH JUDGE.

FROM the earliest ages on record Irishmen have always had a taste and genius for law. In that domain they find scope for their natural eloquence, their love of argument, their sharpness and ingenuity. Their oratory is more of the forensic style than the judicial, possessing rather the quality of sweet or cogent persuasiveness than the merit of clear and calm statement. In olden days the Irish were just as fond of laying down the law. They had a hereditary caste of lawyers called Brehons, who were people of very great importance. Every prince had his own Brehon, who acted as his assessor, his adviser, and his herald. The Brehon was always called in when there was a dispute, and the occasion was not passed by without notice. For then, as now, numbers thronged to hear the debates and the decisions. The poet Spenser, in his "Discoverie of the State of Ireland," describes how he saw their meetings on the ancient hills, which they attended in crowds armed to the teeth. The blackthorn stick of the present day can hardly be called a weapon of war, but it is questionable whether, when wielded by the muscular sinewy arm of an Irishman, it has not proved as effective as the sword or pike of

the happy days of the olden time. The custom of going armed to the seat of judgment was, however, no reflection on the authority of the court, for popular opinion was on the side of the Brehon, and anyone who refused to abide by his decision was visited with punishment in the shape of "erics" or fines of so many cows, which were distrained by the predecessors of the modern bailiffs. But if the offender was unable to pay, the whole family to which he belonged was compelled to settle with the plaintiff. In this case the defendant was deprived of his civil status and all his privileges as a member of the tribe, especially his allotment of ground, which was handed over as part of payment to the creditors. The Brehons were taught to be scrupulously impartial and just. Moran, the King of Ireland, the chief Brehon of the land in the first century, is described as wearing a collar of gold (Iodhan Morain or Moran's Collar), which was said to possess the property of choking an unjust judge. Mageoghan thus describes the law the Brehons administered: "This Fenechus or Brehon lawe is nothing but the civil law which the Brehons had to themselves in an obscure and unknown language which none could understand except those that studied in the open schools. Some were judges, and others were admitted to plead as barristers, and for their fees, costs and all, received the eleventh part of the things in demand of the party from whom it was ordered; the loser paid no costes."

The Brehon generally gave his decision seated on a stone within an ancient rath, around which were gathered an eager, excited crowd of listeners, who followed every turn of the case with interest, enjoying keenly, as Irishmen only can, the wordy strife and the battle of arguments. Near Canterbury, in England, I believe there is an old fort called Daingean, where the ancient Brehons gave judgment. Before the Brehon, families brought their quarrels, and townships their feuds, and the judgment given, the contending parties, after submitting to the decision, withdrew. The judge had his fees, which were very high; it being not unusual for him to receive fifteen cows and ten days' entertainment for his services. But if an appeal was lodged against his sentence, and he was convicted of giving a partial decision, he was branded on the cheek.

An Englishman named Campion, who travelled through Ireland in Queen Elizabeth's day, has left us this interesting account of the Brehons and their schools: "They speak Latin, like a vulgar language, learned in their schools of leechcraft and law, whereat they begin as children, and hold on sixteen or twenty years, conning by rote the aphorisms of Hippocrates and the Civil Institutes, and a few other parings of those two faculties. I have seen them where they kept school—ten in some one chamber—grovelling upon couches of straw, their books at their noses, themselves lying prostrate, and so to chaunt out their

lessons by piecemeal, being the most part lusty fellows of twenty-five years and upwards."

We can almost imagine we can see those stalwart lads of the days of good Queen Bess, working away at their law quite oblivious of their sordid surroundings, and when school was over rushing out to air their brains and brace their muscles in a vigorous game of hurling, which has always been popular with Irish "boys" of the peasant class who still wield the coman which has given its name to Gortcommon or the hurling field, with skill.

The Brehon code which they studied was spoken of by some of the earlier English authorities in terms of the greatest contempt, while it was declared by Irish writers to be a mine of wisdom and equity. But now that we are able to read it in a translation, we find that the arguments on both sides were exaggerated; for it was neither a divine code nor a diabolical custom. The system and principles of the Brehon law were adapted to the tribal organisation of the people, and bears much resemblance to the laws of other Aryan nations in the same stage of development. Originally it was handed down by word of mouth, but in the course of time, the various customs, usages, and decisions were collected and codified, and after the introduction of Christianity were revised. It may interest our readers to be initiated more fully into the principles of the law which prevailed in Ireland for thousands of years down to the reign of James I. In

the *Senchus Mor*, which claims to have been compiled under the auspices of St. Patrick, we have the following description of its origin :—" How the judgment of true nature which the Holy Ghost had spoken through the mouths of the Brehons and just poets of the men of Erin, from the first occupation of the island down to the reception of the Faith, were exhibited by Dubhtach to Patrick, what did not clash with the word of God in the written law and in the New Testament, and with the consciences of the believers, was confirmed in the law of the Brehons by Patrick and by the ecclesiastics and the chieftains of Erin. For the law of nature had been quite right except the Faith and its obligations, and the harmony of the Church and the people."

The fundamental ideas of the code were two—arbitration and compensation. The source of all judicial authority in the tribe life lay in the interference of the public in the interests of peace. A crime was looked upon as a personal wrong, not as a public offence. There was, in fact, no state to be offended, no state authority to be upheld. The community merely intervened in the matter as arbitrators. Consequently, the legal system pointed not to sentence but settlement. The object of the arbitrators was to bring about a compromise, and consequently corporal and capital punishment were out of the question. The compensation was made according to a scale of damages. Murder and outrage were atoned for by

payment to the family of the injured. It was the function of the Brehon to assess the amount of damages in the action. This was a work of great difficulty, as every circumstance in each particular case had to be taken into account—the rank and motives of the defendant, the rank and conduct of the plaintiff, the nature of the injury and the place where it was inflicted requiring consideration. In the course of time, as the cases and judgments multiplied, the study of the law and its precedents became a very absorbing and complicated matter. But, as we have seen, the post of Brehon was a lucrative one. There was, therefore, a great encouragement to men of ability to enter the profession, which eventually became hereditary or confined to certain families.

We shall now say something about one particular family of Brehons who were greatly distinguished in the annals of Ireland—the MacEgans. This family had a good and pious record. The chief Brehons of Ireland, especially those of Munster and Connaught, sprang from its branches. It was especially renowned for learning and hospitality. Galway was the headquarters of this clan Diarmada, which was widespread. It had possessions in the neighbourhood of Lorrha. At Coillte Ruadha, now Redwood, the MacEgans, Dionysius, and Darius had a castle. And at Killaleigh, the modern Sopwell, the residence of Captain the Hon. Cosby Trench, the MacEgans had a large castle, which is maintained in splendid

preservation. Cromwell, who dispossessed MacEgan, gave his ancestral halls to the famous Colonel Sadleir, and accommodated the evicted family with a residence on the lake. One of the national bards has eulogised the MacEgans in the following verses :—

> " Precedence for his valour and fame
> Be given to MacEgan the noble ;
> Record him for the activity of his warriors,
> Of his prosperity and great renown.
> The Clan Diarmada, north and south,
> To place them in my poem is a duty."

The Four Masters give several interesting notices of this remarkable family. In 1309 a MacEgan, who rejoiced in the name of Giolla-na-neev, or servant of the saints, and held the post of Chief Brehon of Ireland, and was considered to be the most learned judge of his time, was killed. Ninety years afterwards died Boetius MacEgan, of Ormond, learned in the laws and in music, and eminent for hospitality. Thirty-one years passed away, and another MacEgan died. This was Fergal, Chief Brehon of North Connaught, "a man learned in the laws and sciences, and who kept a house of hospitality for all persons who came to his place, and died after a well-spent life." And after thirteen years died Hugh MacEgan, a man who added eloquence to all the hereditary gifts of knowledge, of law, hospitality, and goodness. We can with confidence point those who speak of the wildness and barbarity of the ancient Irish to this record of a family which would be a credit to any

nation, and which was an honour to those by whom it was honoured.

The Castle of Annameadle, near Toomavara, was the chief seat of the family in Ormond. Ballymacegan was called after it, and Ballyoughter was their burial place. Lislea (Greyfort), and Lisleabeg (Little Greyfort), close to Borrisokane, now in the possession of the Saunders family, also belonged to the MacEgans. Such was a race of Brehons who administered the law, and who carried their decisions without any executive save that of moral force. To their justice and equity, foreigners, like Spenser, bore ungrudging testimony. Of their love for their law, Sir John Davies (1610) in his letter to Robert, Earl of Salisbury, gives evidence, wherein he describes the first assizes that was held in Fermanagh among the ruins of the Abbey in the island of Lough Erne, when the venerable Brehon of the McGuires, who had possessed the land from time immemorial, drew from his breast, with trembling hands, the ancient roll, with which he refused to part, until the Deputy, Sir Arthur Chichester, gave his word to return it. It was at this time that the Brehon law was suspended in Ireland, and the English judges, who had been hitherto confined to the Pale, were now sent through all the country.

There was one peculiar custom which deserves mention in connection with the Brehon. It was the system of levying kincogues, or "kindred moneys." In the days of the Tories, or the dispossessed

landlords, who had turned brigands and cattle-lifters, and supported themselves in their mountain retreats on the cows and sheep of the English occupiers of their lands, this custom of Kincogues was made law. And it worked in this way. When a band of outlaws swooped down from the hills upon a man's herd and carried them off, compensation was made to him by fines levied on the members of the guilty family who were living under English protection. But as it was often impossible to raise a great sum of money from a few poor people, all the Irish in the barony in which the outrage was committed were held liable for the damages, which were extended over other baronies through which the outlaw had been allowed to escape. Although Spenser objected strongly to this law, there was a great deal of common sense in its principle, for it acted as a preventive of sympathy with crime, and, therefore, of crime. The same principle to a certain extent operates now-a-days. For the county has to pay for any malicious outrage that is committed by unknown persons. But as the majority of the rate-payers are respectable, law-abiding folk, and the criminal class is generally exempt from taxes of all kinds, the innocent have often to suffer for the guilty. Still the interests of justice are, on the whole, furthered by this procedure. The arrangement, however, of costs under the Brehon system, by which the loser in a case paid no costs, is one we would not gladly see introduced again; for it would tend to prevent poor

people who had a just claim or a righteous cause from seeking the assistance of the law.

In their schools the Brehons calculated the amount of damages to be levied for a cat stealing milk, or for bees stinging a stranger, with mathematical precision. They recorded the provisions that regulated the boundaries of land, the preservation of roads, woods, water-courses, bees, dress, and hospitality. But in those palmy days there was no game law. The sportsmen had it all their own way. At a time when in England a man dared not hawk or hunt on his own estate, a right which was only wrested from the absurdly wicked King John by Magna Charta, the Irish never knew the meaning of the Forest Law or Game Law, and would not allow it to be imposed upon them. On this truly sportsmanlike characteristic of the Irish chieftain and his men, Sir John Davies made this grim comment. When lamenting that the English had not succeeded in making the Irish give up their sport, he says: "If they had, it might have been the means of conquest; for they might have turned the Irish out of the wild places where they dwelt in freedom, and might have given them up to the beasts of the chase, less hurtful and less wild than they." It would, however, have taken the Norman Kings all their time to preserve the game in Ireland, and to reduce the Irish to such a degree of servility that the very birds would appear to know that they were under the royal protection, as they did in

England. There is an interesting account given by one of John's mercenaries of the way in which the birds in England would not fly from the traveller, but merely move on and continue to feed. One might safely wager that a few Irish gossoons would soon have taught them to keep at a respectable distance.

But though the Brehons had not to adjudicate in cases of infringement of the game laws, they had sometimes very curious quarrels to settle. We shall conclude with an account of one historic and important judgment given by a Brehon. It appears that a well-known Irish saint, in the seclusion of a monastery, ventured to make a copy of a Psalter belonging to his host, who was so enraged by an action that was truly laudable in itself, but which was considered in that unenlightened age as a breach of privilege, that he brought the matter before Diarmaid King of Meath, one of the principal Brehons of the land, who gave the extraordinary decision that the copy should be returned to the owner of the book; "For," he argued, "as to every cow belongs her own calf, so to every book belongs its own copy." But Columba would not return the book, and the consequence was a battle, in which many Meath men were slain.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IRISH BARD.

Of the Irish bard very little is known; but whatever history has to record of him gives us an appetite for more information concerning him and his profession. Still there are vestiges of an elaborate and powerful organisation, there are traces of men of thought behind the mountains of time. Allured by these fitful lights, stray beams in the darkness of the past, we take up our quest, as the knights of old went forth in their search for the Holy Grail, trusting that we may find something tangible—something which may be a basis for theory, or a starting-point for further research, or reform in University life.

It would appear that both the word bard and the office it indicates are of Celtic origin. It is a Welsh word. A Roman poet called the national poets of the Celtic race bards. These, the national singers of Gaul, were silenced by the Roman arms; but in Britain, Wales, and Ireland the voice of the bard kept alive the ancient poetry and traditions of the people. The Celts were a distinct, a chosen people, though we do not seek to identify them with the Jews, as some would do, who look for the tables of the law on Tara's Hill, and in nothing more did they show their

distinction, in nothing more did they justify Heaven's selection than in their noble patronage of the sacred art of song. There was not merely one poet laureate, a single singer supported by the bounty of his countrymen, for every bard was a stipendiary. Every bard had special privileges and rights. No tax-gatherer ever impounded his cattle. Not even the Prince dare speak of reducing his rents.

A rather distinguished-looking personage in those days, he would appear a comical specimen of humanity if met in the streets of modern Dublin. By special permission he was allowed to array his body in the five colours—white, blue, green, black, and red (to which an additional colour was in time added)—which, laid on in stripes, made him a variegated, if not venerated object.

He allowed his beard to grow long and full, as indeed did all the ancient Irish. It will be remembered that that silly and churlish Prince John amused himself and his Norman companions by plucking the beards of the worthy chieftains as they were taking the oath of allegiance to him. Over his locks, which were twisted into a straight, stiff coil behind his neck, like a horse's tail, called a glibbs, he wore a hat in shape like an antiquated football-cap, or a fisherman's knitted headpiece. This covering was called a *barrad*, which, doubtless, because patronised by the bards, came to be regarded as a sacred appendage, for we occasionally find angels adorned

with it. Those who have visited the Cemetery of St. Peter's, Drogheda, know to what I refer. Although the *barrad* was anything but a handsome decoration, after it had gone out of fashion some people who favoured the antique sought to reintroduce it. Walker, in his memoirs, tells us of one Hugh Dungan, a valiant yeoman of Kilkenny, who proudly donned the *barrad* and paraded the streets, followed in his wake by a crowd of admiring and by no means silent boys. For clothes the bard wore a *cota* or tunic of plaided stuff or dyed linen. This was like an ornamented jersey, with short sleeves. The famous Shane O'Neill and his kerns paid a visit to Queen Elizabeth all arrayed in these saffron-coloured *cotas*, and the London populace were amazed at such an exhibition of muscle and hardihood. Around the waist a girdle was worn like a belt, and over his broad shoulders fell a *cochal*, a long cloak with a large collar or hood, which was often used as a protection for the head. This garment was fastened at the neck by a brooch or dagger. The bodkin was often used for this purpose, being a very convenient article, serving several purposes, and chiefly used for fastening. In battle the Irishman used to twist this cloak several times round his left arm as a defence for his person, while his right hand wielded the spear or the sword. The bard's distinctive mantle—his college gown—was called a *suadh*. There was another upper garment used, doubtless, as a sort of full dress. It was called

a canabhas or fillead, and consisted of a large loose garment falling to the feet. The saints who are depicted on St. Boyne's cross at Monasterboice are arrayed in similar vestments, which are by some identified with the alb and chasuble. The length of it was occasionally an impediment, for in the well-known description of the death of Cuchullin, we read that "he entangled his foot in his mantle and was covered with confusion."

In the olden days, when everything was written in verse, the bard was an important personage. He combined several offices in one. Drayton cleverly sums them up in the lines—

"Musician, herald, bard, thrice may'st thou be renowned,
And with three several wreaths immortally be crowned."

We may compare Orpheus, Amphion, Linus, and Musæus of the early Greeks with Amergin of Erin, who is described in the verse—

"Primus Amerginus, genu candidus, author Ierne,
Historicus, judex, lege poeta, sophus."

A regular order like the Homeridae, their office was to celebrate the victories of the nation and the prowess of its warriors. A person of distinction in a poetical age—historians tell us that the beginnings of literature are always poetical—he became restricted in influence in the days of prose, for he who filled the offices of historian, legislator, judge, poet, philosopher, and herald, came in after days to be represented by a mere

singer of national or topical songs, a common player on the harp. It was the same in other countries, and notably in Greece. But this is a digression.

The bard of the palmy days was an educated gentleman. His course occupied twelve of the best years of his life. That time he spent in one of the colleges, of which there were several, most of them destined like that of Inis-owen (Inis-Eogain) which Columkille turned into the monastic school of Derry, and those of Clogher, Armagh, and Lismore, to give way to Christian institutions, which were to be established on their ruins. There he was taught by the Druids to sing, and to set to music their laws, their system of physic, and their other sciences. There he learnt the rules of his art, and the codes of his profession, which were many and intricate. As the vocation of bard was strictly hereditary, only the son of a bard could be admitted into these seminaries. This rule had one good effect, for though it excluded brilliant geniuses, or infant prodigies, whose appearance cannot always be accounted for by heredity, it generally secured men of good memories and appearance, and proved in the main to be a fair working principle.

After going through his course and standing his examination in the three different sections of law, history, and music, the young aspirant to bardic honours was given his degree. The test was a severe one, for there were no honorary degrees conferred in

those days. The successful candidate wrote down his name with the degree Ollamh, which is the same as Doctor before it, and assumed the classical hat, the *barrad* which we have just described. He could then become a Filea or poet, a Breitheamhain (Brehon) or administrator of the law, or a Seanacha or historian.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BARDIC ORDER.

THE Bardic Order of Ancient Erin was thus a distinguished caste, and an elaborate system. Embracing music, poetry, history, and law, the Bardic Order permitted its votaries to select the subjects for which they felt themselves more especially adapted. The boy might devote himself to the study of music, such as it was, and poetry, or to the reading of the laws of the land, or to learning the history of the different septs. The lad who selected music and poetry became in time the Bard par excellence; the student who embraced the law aspired to the position of Brehon; while he who entered for history came out a full-blown Seanacha. Generally speaking, however, the Bard was supposed to make himself acquainted with all these subjects. Amergin, the first of the bards, is described in the Latin epigram by O'Flaherty as "the fair-kneed author of Ierne, historian and judge and poet, skilled in law." To the Bard we shall now give our attention. The history of these ancient singers and chroniclers of our country is wrapt in profound mystery. Fiction has here, however, boldly usurped the place of fact. It is stated on some authority that the name Tuatha-de-Danaan is a word compounded

of three different words, which mean lord, priest, and bard respectively. But it was not, perhaps, till the Milesian era that the bards were introduced into Erin.

It is not generally known that, as Rome had her Romulus and Remus, and England her Hengist and Horsa, so Erin had an equally wonderful pair of brothers, who managed between them to conquer the land and to crush for ever the power of the Tuatha-de-Danaans, and who did all they could to encourage the arts among their subjects. They were Heber and Heremon. To Heremon's lot fell "the Black North," and to Heber the sunny South of Ireland. Both brothers, it is said, had been attended by Cir-mac Cis, a poet, and Onna Ceamfinn, a harper. As the brothers went their several ways, one to the north and the other to the south, they agreed to cast lots for the poet and the musician, and the result was that Heremon took the poet and Heber got the musician. Their brother Amergin, who has already been mentioned, assumed the rank of Archdruid and the rank of Ard-Filea, or chief bard, both offices being united in his person. In after times the functions were specialised, although it would seem that originally the office of Druid and bard was one and the same.

We have a remarkable fragment of a poem which is supposed to have been written by him to commemorate the second landing of the Milesians in Ireland, and a truly wonderful description of the fishes leaping

out of the stormy waters to seek safety on the shore —a marvellous stretch of imagination.

The chief business of the Filidhe, or bards, was to turn the tenets of religion into verse, to compose war songs and marriage odes. At "the feast of the hill" he amused the people, like the bard in the Odyssey, with tales of other days. The Irish poetry was a by no means simple study. In the work, "Uiraiceacht na Neagir," or rules for the poet, over one hundred different species of poetry are described. And in their colleges the course of study was long and severe. But we do not find that the graceful muses confined their influence to the schools of the poets. For we read that the daughter of Moran was celebrated for her musical powers as other ladies, notably Eimker, the wife of Cuchullin, were for their poetical compositions.

As Augustus Cæsar was the great patron of poetry in early Rome, so was Ollamh Fodhla the gracious protector and guardian angel under whose fostering care poetry flourished in Erin. It is said that he founded a college at Teamor called Mur-olla-van, where young men of good birth and intellect were instructed in verse and song, metre and music. An air of sanctity was given to the class by the King, who arranged that the estates of the bards should not be confiscated, that their homes should be asylums for fugitives, and that their stock should be free from depredation. A melancholy duty devolved upon the

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bards when anything untoward happened to their tribe. When a prince or chieftain was slain in battle, the "stones of his fame" were raised avidst the voices of the bards. After the heathen priests, the Druids, had performed their religious rites, whatever they may have been, the caoine or dirge, which was specially composed for the occasion by the Filea of the dead and set to music by his Oirsidigh, was sung by a rhapsodist. The latter rendered the solo passages, while the symphonic parts were taken by a chorus of bards and Oirsidigh divided into two parts like a cathedral choir. Travelling through Ireland we pass many a small dolmen—two stones supporting a cap stone—which tradition tells us is the resting place of some great chief. As we stand by that enduring memorial of ancient prowess, we cannot but fill in the landscape—which is always beautiful—with the animated and picturesque figures of the national bards chanting the funeral song their chief had composed, in which all the virtues and beauties and deeds of the deceased were feelingly set forth. In after days the office of wailing the dead was allotted to female musicians—the predecessors of the later keeners. We may compare the Scotch coronachs and the lamentation of David over Saul. Although the bard became, in after times, a simple harpist, in the fulness of his power he occupied a more exalted position than that. Marching at the head of the army, robed in long, flowing vestments, a collar of gold about his neck,

and surrounded with the Oirsidigh or instrumental musicians, he was a dignified and an imposing figure. Exempted from the duty of actual fighting, he watched from a commanding eminence the fortunes of the battle and the actions of his chief.

When war had been declared, the bard was consulted like an oracle as to the probable issue. And here—we speak without profanity—we notice how the bards affected to play a similar part in the history of their tribes to that which the sacred singers—the prophets of Israel—played among the chosen people, for the bards were regarded as prophets. They were generally supposed to predict success, and no doubt they liked to encourage this opinion. We do not read that they were ever found out to be false prophets, although it is only reasonable to infer from the universal preference of the Irish people to say what is agreeable, that they would much rather prophesy smooth things than offend the feelings of their faction. There was, however, a general understanding that the bard had the privilege, in virtue of his high office, to advise the king and reprove him for his faults. As an old bard quaintly said, "How arduous then the Fileas talk! for it behoveth him to mark each backsliding and not to overlook even a tendency to evil."

The prophet of victory in war, the censor of morals in the court, the bard was, indeed, an important item in the royal establishment.

Irish bards, we read, were formerly in great request, Wales often sending over for an Irish bard to come and teach their sons the arts of the Muse. There seems to have been—as the present writer has already pointed out—much interchange of good will between Wales and Ireland long before, what should be called, the Welsh invasion, for Fitzstephens, Barry, Fitzgerald, and others who preceded Strongbow, were all Welshmen, descendants of Nesta, a fascinating Welsh princess. And Ireland was really opened by these warriors for the English, who followed. It is not improbable that, as the Welsh joined in a recent Celtic demonstration in Dublin, the ancient Irish sent representatives to the Eisteddfod, or the national festival of the ancient Britons, beyond the Channel.

But it was at the triennial Feis at the palace of Teamore or Tara—instituted by the great Ollamh Fodhla, King of Ireland—that the Irish bard played a conspicuous part.

In the centre of the great hall—the site of which is hardly recognisable to-day among the scanty debris of the past—the throne of the Ard-Righ, the chief king, was placed facing west. In front of him at a small distance sat the King of Leinster, enthroned on a lower throne. On the left of him was seated the King of Munster, on his right the King of Ulster, and behind him the King of Connaught; then came long rows of seats. To the Druids and the Fileadhe, or bards, were allotted the first of these, and in the

second circle, as it were, sat the Marshal, the Seanachaide, the Oirsidigh, the standard-bearers, and officers of State. (Keating's *History of Ireland* and Walker's *Memoir of the Irish Bards*).

Behind these the nobility and knights were accommodated, and in the last rows sat the Beatachs and representatives of towns and cities. The first two days were spent in social visits and hospitality by the chiefs and princes and in feasting and revelry by their attendants. But the third day was the feast of Samhuin or the Moon, in the temple of Tiachta. Then the opening of the assembly was announced by sacred odes recited by the Ard-Filidhe, with musical accompaniments by the Oirsidigh. And after the Druids had finished their rites and mysteries, the fire of Samhuin was lighted up and the pagan deities were invoked to bless the councils of the chiefs.

The next three days were spent in hospitality and feasting. And when the time appointed for the council drew near, the great circular trumpet was sounded and the esquires presented themselves and gave in the shields and insignia of their masters to the Grand Marshal, who suspended them according to their rank. A second shrill blast summoned the target bearers of the general officers, and a third brought out the princes, nobility and officers, who at once took their places decently and in order. After refreshments had been served out and partaken of, the seanachaide, who acted as registrars, came forward and laid

their reports and records before the august assemblage. When these reports were passed, they were turned into verse and inscribed in the Register or Psalter of Tara.

The conference consisted of several sessions. Between the sessions the bards of the different princes were ordered to collect the records of their districts, and their families and lay them before the States. Truly a very business-like and well-contrived work which well deserved the encomium of Swift—"As barbarous and ignorant as we were in former centuries, there was more effectual care taken by our ancestors to preserve the memory of times and persons than we find in this age of learning and politeness, as we are pleased to call it."

What the special business of the Feis was we can only guess. But we would not be far wrong if we considered that schemes for the improvement of the conditions of life, the laws of the land, and national education took up a large portion of the programme. For we find that so early as 574 A.D. the King of Ireland presided over a council of chiefs and nobles which was convened to arrange a course of studies for the different schools. At that time Ireland was the great nursing-mother of *les belles lettres* for the greater portion of Europe. We can thus draw a parallel between the sixth century and the twentieth, for, although we cannot say we monopolise the learning of Europe, we may say without any conceit that

the ordinary native of Ireland, not to ascend any higher, is behind the inhabitants of the same rank of no other country in the world in mental capacity. While in the matter of education everyone knows that it is the burning subject of the day, every political platform being weighed down with schemes for its reform, and the career of modern Parliaments being strewn with the fragments of failures to settle this question. But we are no nearer the settlement of this question than ever we were. The truth is that it is absurd and impossible to run the education of one generation in the grooves which regulated the education of the preceding age. Every age has its own requirements, its own problems. Our people, generally speaking, require an education that will prepare them for a commercial and industrial life. They can no longer live on the land. Ireland must regard herself as the nursery of other nations. Her sons and her daughters must be equipped at home with the knowledge which will serve them abroad. They should learn to speak and write French and German, and especially the latter, as it is rapidly distancing the French in range and usefulness. They should be taught the different trades that our age has created. Above all things, they should be taught good manners, deportment, and the necessity of cultivating that almighty art—tact. With a good trade, a fair knowledge of another modern language besides their own, and their manly optimism and naturally agreeable

manner, Irishmen and Irishwomen may go anywhere and never starve.

And as for application to study, where can we find a better object-lesson in this art than the description which Campion gave of the young aspirants for the rank of Brehon? "I have seen them," he says, "grovelling upon couches of straw, their books at their noses, themselves lying prostrate and chaunting out their lessons by piecemeal." This is an interesting picture of the law students of the Tudor period, and speaks well for the application of those who, oblivious of their sordid surroundings, were all intent upon the goal of their ambition.

To return to the bards, we find them high in honour, enjoying a precedence over the nobles and knights and gentry at the great Feis. We do not wonder that their hearts were lifted up and that the fates were provoked by their pride. They had become a powerful order. But they abused their position to amass wealth and possessions. It had been found expedient to reduce their number to two hundred. But this salutary provision was not sufficient to check the swelling tide of their ambition. And matters at last reached a climax, and the bards were banished.

It came to pass in this way. In the reign of Achay the Third, several of the Ollaimh of Munster and Leinster, in their capacity as Brehons or legislative bards, invaded private property to such an extent that they actually had to fly to the hills of Scotland

for safety. Embezzlement had evidently been made on a great scale, and a vast conspiracy to defraud must have been discovered before they were compelled to adopt such a course. From this unhappy predicament they were rescued by the timely intervention of Concovar MacNessa, King of Ulster, who became their mediator, and obtained permission for them to return home. But most of the returned fugitives remained at the Court of the King, who devised new improvements in the constitution of the order. To help him in this work he invited Forchern Neid and Atharne of Ben Edair—the modern Howth—to his Court at Eamania, where they assisted in the revision of the laws, and introduced new gradations into the bardic system, and published the tables of the law—the Taibhle Fidea, or wood-tables of the learned.

But such regulations were not effectual to settle the difficulty. The bards were in trouble again, and this time it was the great Irish missionary to Scotland, St. Columba, who came back to Ireland in order to save the bards from expulsion at the council of Drumceatt (575). They had become arrogant and purse-proud. Their insolence knew no bounds. They stigmatised a King who killed a bard in battle as "foul-head." The five colours were not sufficient for them; they demanded the golden buckle and pen of royalty. They became also corrupt in their habits, dishonest and sensual—a very burden to the State, a very curse to the nation that bore them.

Very different had been their influence in the olden days, when they often brought about peace by their wise intervention between combatants. What time Fin and Gall were fighting near Almhain, we are told that the bards acted like the Sabine women in the early days of Rome, rushing between the ranks of the contending warriors and charming them, like the fabled Orpheus, into peace.

It was doubtless owing to this work of arbitration that the bards were not swept away, as the Druids were, by the advent of Christianity to these shores, but continued to remain on, a prosperous and useful community, until they were finally silenced by the Statute of Kilkenny. For we read that Donchad O'Daly, Abbot of Boyle, excelled all other bards of his age in the hymnal species of poetry. From the ranks of these pagan scribes the Christian clergy were frequently drawn.

Reference has been made in a preceding chapter to the Brehons, or legislative bards, who gave laws in a monotonous, sing-song voice from a stone within an ancient rath, from which place they also delivered judgment in all cases that were brought to them for trial, acting rather as arbitrators than as judges, and arranging settlements rather than delivering sentences. These administrators of the law were considered above corruption. It is said that Moran, King of Ireland, and the Chief Brehon in the land, wore a gold collar —the Iodhan Morain—which was said to have the

property of choking an unjust judge. A Brehon convicted of partiality was liable to be branded on the cheek. The principal work of the Brehons was to assess the amount of damages to be paid in each case. With mathematical precision they calculated what damages should be paid when the cat stole the milk or the bees stung a stranger. The eleventh part of the things in demand were given as fees to the Brehons, the loser, by a beautiful arrangement which, alas, no longer holds, paying no costs.

With regard to the third class of the bards—the Seanachaide—who were the antiquarians and chroniclers of their day, very little is known. Suffice it to say that each prince and chief kept a Seanacha, who had charge of the titles and family-trees of the establishment. The Irish had a natural taste for history and pedigrees. Dugald MacFirbis murdered at Dunflin, in Sligo (1670), was the last of the line of the celebrated antiquarians who produced among other works the Book of Lecan, at Castle Forbes. It is also reported that an Ollamh-Re-Seancha was appointed to chronicle the events and preserve the traditions of each province. And thus it would appear that the Ulster King-at-Arms is descended from a race of Irish bards and is the modern representative of the ancient Seanachaide —the chroniclers in the courts of the Irish Kings.

CHAPTER X.

THE CELT AND THE NORMAN.

THE FUSION OF THE NATIONS.

THE Irish inhabitants at the time of Strongbow's invasion were a high-spirited, free-born race. They were a nation of warriors whose minds were as mighty as their bodies were big. "The Irish," wrote Spenser, "are one of the most ancient nations that I know of in this world, and come of as mighty a race as the world ever brought forth.' They were, as we have seen, an offshoot of that great Celtic people that spread over all Europe, that broke the mighty power of the Roman legions, that carried destruction and devastation up to the walls of Athens, that swept like a great wave, a tidal wave, over the fair voluptuous cities of the rich, well-watered plains of Grecian Asia, striking terror into the fluttering hearts of the maidens of Miletus, whose song has been preserved in the Greek Anthology.

> "Then let us hence, Miletus, dear,
> Sweet native land, farewell,
> The insulting wrongs of lawless Gaels
> We fear whilst here we dwell."

But at last the furious irresistible charge of the Celtic tribes was stayed by Antiochus, who earned the name of saviour of his country for this great service. But

already the luxury of the sweet and happy life in the bright valleys and plains of the East had softened the warrior spirits and enervated the muscular frames of a race that is never so well as when at work. Into Italy again they poured, now under their own chiefs, and under great war-loving generals like Pyrrhus and Hannibal, whose military eye had already been attracted by the warlike qualities of a soldiery that has never known defeat when properly handled. The Gauls, like their Irish cousins, never knew what fear was. "They march openly to their end," said Strabo. Polybius tells us of the young chiefs of the Gesatæ, who in the ardour for the battle, stripped themselves naked, leaving on their golden collars on their necks and their armlets on their arms to distinguish them in the *mêlée*. While St. Leger, the Lord Deputy described the Irish kernes as coming "to the bicker but bare naked." Disdaining as cowardly the Norman custom of wearing defensive armour they rushed headlong on their mailed foes, with only their light shields on their arm, and small helmets on their heads, and often perished but never were conquered, for their spirits were never crushed like those of the poor Britons, who had been driven by the murderous Saxon and land-seeking Norman across the Severn and behind the Cambrian hills. There, indeed, they breathed freely; but what of those who remained on the other side in thraldom to the cruel thanes and barons? "Who dare compare the English?" says

Giraldus Cambrensis, "the most degraded of all races under heaven, with the Welsh. In their own country they are the serfs, the veriest slaves of the Normans, and in ours who have we but Englishmen for herdsmen, shepherds, and cobblers, and for the performance of the lowest offices?" We are thankful to say that in after years the English prevailed over the French invaders, and are now the solid backbone of the great Anglo-Saxon race. But in the days of Strongbow the English were a crushed and beaten race, and that the Irish never were. One reason why the latter succeeded in maintaining their freedom was their love for the pastoral and village life. They hated towns, they despised the townspeople, they loathed trade. They led a healthy, active existence in the open air, on their mountain heath or their woodland pastures. Such a life always tends to develop the manliest qualities, vigour of body and strength of mind. In their conflicts with their enemies, their skirmishes with one another, their continuous warfare with the prowling wolf and terrible bear they acquired habits of fortitude and self-reliance, which the life within a city's gates or behind a fortified wall have never encouraged, because the sense of security is fatal to the spirit of independence. It was not the Celtic genius, therefore, that founded the towns the Normans found when they came to Ireland, but it was the commercial spirit of the Danes, and the Ostmen of the North, strangers that had swooped like harpies upon the

fair havens of the Green Isle, and endeavoured to settle themselves as colonists in the land. Perhaps these towns had been built long before by merchants from the South of Europe; for Tacitus says the parts of Ireland were better known to merchants than those of England.

Nor had the Irish any taste for commerce or trade. Giraldus, the Welsh historian of this period, tells us that these towns on the coasts were inhabited by a mixed multitude of Danes and French, who kept the Irish well supplied with groceries and wines.

A people of pastoral habits, they lived on the land they loved, having it common to all of one tribe. The chief and the tanist, his elected successor, alone had lands appropriated to them, while the bards, physicians, and Brehons also had special lots set apart for their use. But the great mass of the people had no settled or durable property in land. They followed their cattle from their summer pastures in the mountains to their winter feeding grounds, enjoying a free, unfettered existence, paying no fixed rent, and never living in dread of eviction in their lightly built huts. It is true that there were dwellings of a more permanent nature around their tillage lands, which were annually meted out among the different families according to their stock and requirements, but it was a fixed principle of the Celtic spirit not to allow property to any great extent to accumulate in the hands of any individual. The land belonged to the

tribe, and to the chief, as representative of the tribe, a certain amount was allotted to enable him to keep up his state. This, however, he was not permitted to leave to his eldest son, but was compelled to divide among all his sons at his death. This custom of gavelkind was most opposed to the feudal system which the Normans sought to introduce into the country, but never succeeded in extending beyond the Pale, for it tended to create a race of small landlords or owners of property upon whom the State had no claim, because they held their lands originally as a gift of their own tribe. No wonder, then, that it was condemned and made treasonable by many a Norman edict.

The villages and village sports, however, owed their origin to the larger settlements around the tillage lands. In nothing have the Irish shown so much their spirit of conservatism as in their adherence to their ancient games. Arthur Young, in 1776, described the game of hurling, which is to-day as much in vogue as ever—"There is a very ancient custom here for a number of country gossips among the poor people to fix upon some young woman that ought, as they think, to be married. They also agree upon a young fellow as a proper husband for her. This determined, they send to the fair one's cabin to inform her that on the Sunday following she is to be horsed—that is, to be carried in triumph on men's backs. She must then provide whiskey and cider for

a treat, as all will pay her a visit after Mass for a hurling match. As soon as she is horsed the hurling begins, on which a young fellow appointed for her husband has the eyes of all the company fixed on him; if he comes off conqueror he is certainly married to the girl; but, if another is victor, he as certainly loses her, for she is the prize of the victor."

We find much earlier, and not less interesting, notices of this game which has ceased to be associated with matrimonial affairs, although it still attracts all the marriageable girls of the peasant class who cannot but admire the strength and agility displayed before their fair eyes by the rival claimants for their applause. For we read among the statutes of Kilkenny, which were made in 1367, that "it is ordained and established that the English do not henceforth use the plays which men call hurlings with great sticks and a ball upon the ground, and other plays called cortings; but that they do apply themselves to draw the bow and throw lances, and other gentlemanlike games appertaining to arms, whereby the Irish enemies may be better checked."

Such were some of the pastimes that induced many of the Norman settlers to throw in their lot with the native Irish, and so helped to break down the barriers of nationality and creed which the English Government were always trying to build up by fresh legislation. But to no purpose, for the English who settled in Ireland always became more Irish than themselves.

Once outside the hated boundaries of the English Pale, where the feudal system and all its burdensome exactions and annoying officials ruled supreme, the naturalised Irishman breathed freely. He no longer was oppressed with the nightmare of confiscations and the dread of forfeitures. He threw off his English dress and language, and discarded the Norman air of superiority. One illustrious instance of this adoption of Irish customs is found in the family of the Earl of Clanricarde, one of whose sons styled himself William M'Eighter and the other William M'Oughter. Of them Sir Henry Sidney wrote that "they had stolen across the Shannon and there cast away their English habit and apparel, and put on their wonted Irish weede." These who are described in the State papers as "tall men who boast themselves to be of the King's blood" spoke and dressed and acted like Irishmen.

Very thankful were these Burkes that the broad Shannon flowed and many a friendly tribe lived between them and the feudal system under which the De Lacys were beggared, and the Geralds, Fitzgeralds, and Butlers groaned in vain. Petition after petition was sent without success by the Prelates, Earls, Barons, and Commons of the land in Ireland complaining of the cruelty and injustice of the King's officers. Accordingly, some of the more powerful nobles, and those who were farthest from Dublin Castle, took the matter into their own hands and ceased to pay feudal dues, and to ensure that no

escheator or sheriff should trouble them they entered into an understanding with the native Irish, especially those who lived near Dublin, such as the Byrnes, the Tooles, and Kavanaghs, and the O'Moores, to prevent the judges on circuit from crossing the bridge of Leighlin, which was the only passage across the Barrow. Thus secured from the interference and supervision of the Norman law, the naturalised Irish threw themselves heart and soul into the ways of the country. They married Irish lasses with raven hair and lightsome eyes, in spite of the cruellest enactments and the most unjust prohibitions; they spoke like Irishmen; they gave out their children to be fostered by their Irish relations; they appeared in the saffron shirt, brogues, and linen coat affected by the Irish; they hunted and hurled and wrestled and sang with their Irish dependents and friends, and administered a mixture of English and Irish law called March law. But for this a time of reckoning was drawing nigh. By the Parliament held at Kilkenny under the Duke of Clarence, who had come over especially to evict the Burkes from their possessions, to which generous purpose he found the Irish friends of these noblemen the greatest obstacle, it was declared high treason to marry an Irishwoman, and the punishment ordained for it was to be half hanged and disembowelled alive (1367).

But acts of legislation and confiscation failed to effect the desired separation, for to live among the

Irish is to love them and their customs. The Irish peasantry followed the descendants of the old Norman invaders, the Butlers and Geraldines and Burkes, to battle with as much confidence as if they were led by one of the O'Connors or O'Moores or O'Kennedys. Side by side the Norman and the Celt thrived. Together in sport and work and battle they learned to respect and admire each other's qualities of mind and body. The Celt gave animation and received discipline. The Norman brought law and skill and tasted freedom and strength. In their marriages with one another the union of hearts was formed, and in their children and their children's children the rival nations blended their powers and virtues to issue in a greater nation than either—the Anglo-Celtic race.

At the present day there are but few of the good old county families that are not as proud to claim descent from some wild Irish chief as they are to assert connection with some proud Norman baron. And as it was among the generous peasantry of Erin that the descendants of the Norman Kings, the oppressed slaves of feudalism and militarism, found a free and natural life, so now the descendants of these Normans are working together with one end in view—the good of their tenantry and the prosperity of their peasantry. For

> " Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay.
> Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,
> A breath can make them as a breath has made.

But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed can never be supplied."

The fear which Goldsmith—an Irishman who loved his native land—expressed in these memorable lines, looms more largely than ever before our minds as we look down the census sheets, and read the appalling statistics under the head of emigration. Surely those who glory in their Irish blood, and those who are no less proud of their Norman names, should unite to devise some means to stop this leakage—not that we grudge to give the world our best sons and daughters to leaven and raise the life of other peoples, but because we apprehend that the supply may one day cease abruptly, and the Irish nation in its Irish home shall demand replenishment, and shall fail to get as good as it has given.

CHAPTER XI.

CELTIC MONUMENTS.

THE CROMLECH.

In this and the following chapter something will be said of the remains of Celtic art and architecture that are to be found in our island. We shall begin with the Cromlech, also known under the name Dolmen or Daul-maen, table stone and menhir, (maen-hir) long stone, with which, however, it must not be identified, reserving our remarks on the Celtic tombs of New Grange and the Round Towers, which, though not Celtic in origin, were raised by Irish hands.

The Cromlech is one of those interesting remains of the Stone Age that affords the student of the history of the nations a subject for research and speculation. These relics, with others of the same principle—temples, dome-roofed caverns, subterranean passages, huge blocks standing in a ring, are found all over Europe, and not a few can be seen in Ireland. The readers of this booklet are doubtless more familiar with them under the names of Druids' altars or giants' graves. "A Cromlech," says Wakeman, "when perfect, consists of three or more stones, unhewn, and generally so placed as to form a small enclosure. Over these a larger stone is laid, the

whole forming a kind of rude chamber. The position of the table or covering stone is generally sloping; but its degree of inclination does not appear to have been regulated by any design." The name cromlech (crom leac, sloping stone) is not thought to be Irish, for if it had been manufactured on the soil, we should most surely have it preserved in the names of the localities where they are found. The ancient Irish often styled memorials of this kind Labby (leaba), which means grave. In O'Brien's dictionary we have the note—"Leaba is the name of several places in Ireland, which are by the common people called Labhaha-na-veana, the monuments of the Fenii or old Irish champions." There is a Labasheeda in Clare, which means Sheedy's grave. In some parts the cromlechs are called by an Irish term signifying the bed of Diarmaid and Grainne,* from the legend that Diarmaid ran away with Grainne, the espoused wife of the celebrated Finn Mac Cumhail (Finn-ma-Cool), and for one year and a day baffled all Finn's efforts to discover them. During his period of flight Diarmaid erected every night a different leaba to shelter Grainne from the wind and rain. This, of course, is legend. But in Cork we have a townland called Labbadermody, Diarmaid's bed.

An even less poetical name than Labby is Griddle. A cromlech on the top of a hill was often called a

* Leaba Dhiarmada-agas-Grainne.

griddle. In Downpatrick we have a hill called Sleeve-na-griddle—the mountain of the griddle. Finn-Ma-Cool, the injured and enraged lover, had his griddle in a bog near Easky, in Sligo.

A very fine cromlech is in the Howth demesne. It is generally called Aileen's grave. The covering stone is a huge block, and is almost on the ground. At the base of a rocky hill, where stones of a great size are to be seen in numbers, the weight of this stone does not strike us so much as other cromlechs, which are found in a neighbourhood completely devoid of similar stones, and which are generally explained as a deposit of the ice age. But in Antrim there is a much more elaborate monument. It is called Carngranny, or Carn-Greine (Granny's Grave), Granny being a corruption of Grian, which means the sun, which appears in the name Tomgraney, and which has not anything to do with the word grandmother. The monument to this Granny, this sunny-faced woman, "consists," as Bishop Reeves tells us, "of ten large slabs raised on side supporters, like a series of cromlechs, forming steps, commencing with the lowest at the north-east, and ascending gradually for the length of forty feet towards the south-west." Such are some of the great stone monuments now generally known as dolmens and cromlechs. We have seen that there is something more substantial than legend connected with them. Who, then, were their builders? Here we may be guided by the fact that no weapon or

implement of any kind of metal has been found in the vicinity of any of these remains. Underneath these dolmens human bones have been found in many cases, and in several places urns have been dug up. The extension of the principle of the dolmen may be seen in the stone chambers and passages of New Grange and Dowth. It is not, however, from Ireland, but from Jersey, that the finest specimen of the cromlech hails. Twenty-two yards in circumference, composed of fifty massive stones, averaging seven feet in height, six in breadth, and four in thickness, and situated on the Town Hill, where Fort Regent now stands, it presented an imposing appearance. It was divided into four perfect cells, had the ruins of a fifth, and was approached by a passage through which one had to creep on hands and feet. This way of entrance was very like that which leads into the fine chamber of New Grange, being fifteen feet long and four feet four inches high, and running east and west. This was, indeed, a colossal cromlech, a miniature Stonehenge. But it has, unfortunately, been removed from the island. There is still a fine specimen in Jersey, near Mount Orgeuil Castle. Situated on a rising knoll, it is approached by what seems to have originally been a covered passage, of which the great side-stones alone remain. The roofing stone, under which a person may stand erect, is several hundred tons in weight being fifteen feet in length, ten and a half in breadth, and three and a half in thickness. Supported on five

great blocks, it forms a fairly-sized chamber, and may have originally been a place of some form of worship or religious function. There are other structures of a similar kind in the Channel Isles. The archæologist, Dr. Lukis, explored a magnificent cromlech in Guernsey, near l'Ancresse Bay. Like the Irish monument of New Grange, it stands within a somewhat broken and indistinct circle of smaller stones. It is roofed by five gigantic capstones, and has another chamber near its eastern entrance. It is now called Le Temple des Druides—the Druids' Temple. When Dr. Lukis first found it, it was choked with sand, but when clearing had been effected, and the sandy layer had been removed, the explorer came upon the bones of animals, oxen and hogs, embedded in a stratum of sand. Below this he came upon the bones of human beings, burnt and unburnt, and underneath all a miniature cromlech, a small capstone on stone props, under which lay a mass of bones and implements, arrowheads, grinding troughs and mullers, hammers and quoits, all of stone. But not one of these was of iron or of any other kind of metal. These megalithic fabrics would not, therefore, have been erected by Celts, who used weapons and implements of bronze and iron—a formidable array of which are now on view in the National Museum, Kildare Place. Moreover, the Celts were not builders in stone. They lived in houses of wood and shining clay, with which, Tacitus tells us, they produced marvellously artistic

effects. Before the Celts came to Ireland the Tuatha-de-Danaans and Firbolgs had lived here. Of these last it is possible that some remains are still to be found. In the caves of the Arran Isles are found skulls and bones belonging to a long-headed, small-boned race of men, somewhat akin in appearance to the Basque inhabitants of the Pyrenees. The Firbolgs, being driven to the extreme west by the better armed and more powerful Aryan invaders, made their last stand in County Clare and the Isles of Arran, where some of their descendants may doubtless be seen to this very day. The fort of Angus, a massive circular fort on the West Coast, consisting of great stones laid one upon the other, the heavier being at the bottom and the lighter at the top of the wall, bears the name of the last Iberian King, while the name of "Scots" was borne by the followers of Queen Scotia. This is all we can say of the builders of the cromlechs. It is very possible that this conjecture may be completely wrong. The cromlechs, at all events, belong to a pre-historic age—an age of which history is silent, and of which geology alone can discover traces.

What was the original purpose of these monuments? Here again we must confess ignorance. But it is apparent that they may have served one or other of two purposes. They may have either been constructed as rude altars by barbarian predecessors in honour of the god they ignorantly worshipped or as enduring monuments of the fame of their strong men

and their beautiful women. For ancient urns and calcined bones have been found beneath. Passing from one idea to the other, the natives of Erin call them now "Druids' Altars," and anon "Giants' Graves." Perhaps both ideas may be harmonised when we remember that the gods of most heathen nations were but deified men and women.

And by what method of leverage were the great cap stones raised into their present position? This is another interesting question to which we can give no definite answer. But conjectures are not wanting.

It has been suggested by the King of Denmark that these massive blocks were worked up over an artificial inclined plane of earthwork. To other antiquarians it has appeared more probable that the smaller stones found in the vicinity of certain of these cromlechs were utilised in this process of lifting. While it has been recently conjectured by Mr. W. Borlase in *The Dolmens of Ireland* that the trunks of the trees which abounded in this even and well-wooded island were employed as leverage, and that the small stones found by the sides of the Dolmens had been originally inserted by the workmen under the great block to secure a purchase for their efforts. It is very likely that the original workmen would laugh at these notions, and would consider them far-fetched and poetical explanations of their simple but enduring achievements. The great Pyramids of Egypt still remain to bear witness to the great efforts and colossal

undertakings of a long-buried civilisation. These marvellous structures, whose raised stone—Clogh-togla *—was a mystery to later races, are a silent but everlasting monument of the brawn and muscle, the affection and adoration of a by-gone race of Irishmen.

Some idea of the number of these monuments in Ireland may be gained from a study of Mr. Borlase's work referred to, in which there is a description of 780 dolmens, 50 chambered tumuli, and 68 other monuments, of a nondescript character. It is remarkable that while there are fewer dolmens in Leinster, there being only 71, as compared with 234 in Munster, 248 in Connaught, and 227 in Ulster; it has 40 chambered tumuli to 10 in all the rest of Ireland.

These prehistoric monuments are not, however, confined to Ireland. They are also to be found in Brittany, Cornwall, Scandinavia, Germany, Spain, Africa, and Austria, and in the Anamalai Hills, South of Madras.

According to Mr. Borlase the dolmen and chambered tumulus are allied in structure and in purpose; and he makes no distinction between the cromlech and the "Giant's Grave." The cromlech he considers a giant's grave *manque*. The stones of a "Giant's Grave" are large and heavy at the west end, but gradually dwindle in size and weight towards the east. The cromlech, in Mr. Borlase's opinion, could be the heavy west end of a giant's grave, which would not

* Cloch-togbhala.

be so easily removed as the east. Every dolmen too he thinks, was originally covered with a quantity of small stones to make the walls of the crypt impervious both to animals and elements.

CHAPTER XII.

IRISH TOMBS AND TOWERS.

STARTING from Dublin by the early train, we arrive in Drogheda by noon, and our cycles carry us in two hours to Slane. As we travel along the south of the Boyne, the banks of which are densely wooded and picturesque, we are passing over the historic battle-ground of William of Orange, and at Oldbridge, crossing the bridge by which the Boyne Obelisk stands sentinel, we come in full view of King William's Glen, and leaving the front entrance of Townley Hall to the right, we follow a hilly but straight road into Slane. Having arrived here, and put up at the small hotel, and satisfied the inner man, we make our arrangements for our tour. There are both Christian and pagan antiquities to be seen, the contrast between them making us reflect seriously upon the great difference of the religions under which they sprang up. Following the order of time we shall first visit the pagan remains. These are principally cemeteries of the dead, and are known by the names of New Grange, Dowth, and Knowth. The first two of these have been opened, and are accessible to visitors, but the last is not. New Grange can be approached from the rear by following the river and crossing

in a punt, or by the front if one takes the road. It is only two miles distant from the town. Having arrived at the gate of the field, we see before us a gently rising hillock of no great height, dotted here and there with small shrubs and trees, and at the base surrounded by massive blocks of stone placed at certain intervals. Approaching near, we discover an entrance apparently leading to a long, dark passage, walled and roofed by solid slabs of unhewn stone. At our feet, covering the mouth of this sepulchral way, lies a huge rock, marked with curious trumpet-shaped patterns. We light our candles and advance boldly, but not feeling at all safe, we creep along on hands and knees, pausing now and then to glance at the curious wedge-formed marks in the stone slabs, one of these exactly representing a Maltese cross, and at last, to our relief, are able to stand bold upright in a lofty, dome-shaped chamber, some twenty-seven feet high. As we examine the walls more closely in the bright flash of the magnesium wire, we observe quaint and beautiful patterns on many of the huge blocks, running round the corners where no human instrument or hand could work, and which, therefore, must have been carved with the Druid symbols before the stones were placed in their present position. Thus we arrive at the secret of the tumulus. The passage and the chamber were first built of huge blocks carted up from the bed of the Boyne, and, having been marked, were placed in their present position, and the whole made

more secure by a covering of earth and sods. There are other passages converging on the chamber from other entrances, all of which have now disappeared, but a stone slab marked with the curious spiral forms we have spoken of above, lying at the extreme north of the mound, may indicate the position of another, which has not been opened. We would not recommend anyone to try to follow up one of these passages, as they are not at all safe. In the apartment itself there are three recesses formed by pairs of huge stones leaning towards each other. Opposite two of these recesses lie two great but shallow basins of solid stone, a larger one being placed in the very centre of the floor. These basins were evidently used in some religious function by the Druids—presumably for burning the dead or sacrificing the living. As we look at them they do not seem so gruesome after all, but if the stones could cry out what terrible tales they would give of the deeds that were done in this cemetery of the kings! The story goes that Cormac Mac Art ordered his followers not to place his body here in Brug-na-Boyne, but in Ross-na-ree (the wood of the kings). However, in spite of his last injunction, his men thrice essayed to carry the corpse across the river, but the floods prevented them from achieving their purpose, so they were unwillingly compelled to lay it in the wood on the south of the river, where curiously enough some remains of a Celtic burial place have been recently discovered. As we return to the town from our visit

to one of the best preserved Celtic monuments, we pass over the great stone bridge which was considered a strong post for military operations by King William, and beneath which the river, rushing down the weir with great force, cuts a foaming course through the many arches. Standing on the bridge we have a good view of the Castle of Slane, the old keep of the Flemings, situated on a noble site commanding the surrounding country; and we are not far from the footsteps of St. Erc, the follower of St. Patrick, who raised, it is said, at his Master's command, a hermitage by the river's brink, where he died in 514. Here is to-day an ancient hermitage with a rough-built cell and cave hewn out beneath, and a stone-roofed chapel, now ivy-mantled and discrowned by time and treason. A thousand years after the death of Bishop Erc, Sir Christopher Fleming placed two friars in the hermitage, which is now in ruins. A little way from the entrance lies a long stone of coffin shape, carved with twelve figures (apostles) on two sides, and at the end with three figures, Christ between two thieves, the one praying, the other scoffing at His words, a living sermon wrought in silent masonry. We are told the country-folk come in numbers on the 15th August to worship here, after hanging out their rags by the ancient well in the demesne. The story is that the doom of Tara was pronounced by the abbot of this hermitage who, finding that the king had not respected the

sanctuary, but had carried away a fugitive who had sought refuge there from his vengeance, proceeded in robes of office and in wrath to the gates of the great settlement, and cursed it from its very foundation. From that day Tara became a tradition of the past, if we can believe the old chroniclers.

We have yet to see the famous College of Slane, where, it is said, Prince Dagobert, of France, was educated and lived for twenty years, 653-673, before he was recalled to his native land and kingdom. The way of approach is by a long steep hill, on the crest of which we find a group of interesting remains, consisting of a ruined abbey and a dismantled church, both of very ancient structure. On the outer wall of the abbey is a stone slab supposed to have engraved upon it the arms of Dagobert. A lion is distinctly visible on the shield. The ruins are very extensive, and well repay an inspection. From the tower of the church, in which there is a beautifully carved window a little to one side of the arched doorway beneath it—a proof of antiquity—one has a view of Drogheda and Tara. These buildings commemorate a most important episode in the history of the nation and the life of the national saint, namely, the lighting of the Easter fires which kindled so great a conflagration in the land that it quite extinguished all the fires of the pagan religion, as the Druids prophesied it would. Whether it be true or not that the Saint here encountered and defeated the Druids by feats

of magic which left them spellbound, is no concern of ours to say or to believe. It is most probable, however, that Patrick made his way from this hill to the court of the king, Laoghaire (Leary, son of Niall of the Nine Hostages) at Tara, where he was well received, and made many converts, young Erc being among them.

The buildings we have described show the rough usage of Danish spoilers and the cruel stains of war. Speaking of the Danes, we are reminded of the great round towers that were built to protect the religious community from their inroads by enabling it to have timely notice of their arrival and safe refuge from their attack. A magnificent specimen, within easy distance of Slane Hill, at Monasterboice, the ancient monastery of Boetius, which has been in ruins since 1117, when its last abbot died, raises its massive form amid a regular cluster of antiquities, two ancient and marvellously sculptured Irish crosses, and the ruined gables and walls of two chapels. This tower is 110 feet in height, and 15 in diameter, and is divided into 5 stories. The entrance being some distance from the ground, commanding the entrance to the church, and evidently approached by a ladder, which was drawn up when the last stragglers of the little band had been called in from the fields just in time to save their precious manuscripts and other treasures, and to escape the fire and sword of the invaders. Then the iron-studded door was closed, and through the

portholes, arrows and missiles were hurled against the marauders, who presently withdrew after pilfering and destroying everything they could lay their hands on.

The origin of the bell tower, the cloig teach, according to the eminent Dr. Petrie, was Christian not Pagan. The bell tolled the hours of service and sounded the alarm; while the towers, lit up with tapers at night, served the country-folk as beacons in the dense and dangerous woods. On the round tower of Roscrea there are curious figures of an antique ship, an axe as well as a cross carved on the arch of the second window, which have led certain people to believe in the Pagan origin of these towers. But two of these signs are Christian, and the use of the tower was distinctly Christian. The idea of the round tower seems to have been brought from France to Ireland. The French suffered as much as we did from the sea-robbers of the North, and in order to protect their churches in the valleys of the Loire and Seine they raised these towers and gave the hint to Irish ecclesiastics like Malachy, who were ever passing backwards and forwards between Ireland and the Continent. In Ravenna similar towers of cylindrical form and conical roof are to be seen. They are the earliest specimens of the Campanile. Eastern influence is evident in the French towers. And this is to be accounted for by the fact that a regular influx of artists and sculptors passed from the East into France after the severe iconoclastic measures of the Emperor

Leo. Charlemagne was glad to employ these strangers, and to them the cylindrical form of these structures is to be attributed. And so we have reason for asserting that they were not fire-temples or Druidical monuments or anchorite towers, but that they served as belfries and places of security for the religious community who dwelt under their shadow.

Ascending this tower by the ladders, which lead from one storey to another, we gain a splendid view of the surrounding country, the hills of Slane and Tara being distinctly visible on one side, and Drogheda and the sea beyond on the other.

The two crosses we have mentioned are very remarkable. In the first place. they are like all old crosses, Celtic in form and association. The taller of them, apparently of one single block of stone, is eighteen feet high. It is called St. Boyne's Cross, probably after some inmate of the monastery. Some almost obliterated letters at the base of the other are supposed to stand for the name, Muredach, an abbot who died here in 923 while figures in high relief all down the shaft represent Scriptural subjects. This the smaller cross is the handsomer of the two. It is divided on its four sides into three panels, Scriptural subjects being represented by grotesque figures with fierce moustachios in high relief on the front panels, the Ascension (?) being represented in the centre of the circle. Plaster casts of both, we believe, are to be seen in the Science and Art Museum, in Kildare street.

Concerning the Irish cross, much has been said and written. There is a great variety and a great number of crosses in Ireland. The word Cross itself, as Dr. Joyce has pointed out, is the name of about thirty townlands, and it forms the first syllable of about 150 others. There is Crosserlough (Cros-air-loch), the cross on the lake; Crossmolina (Cros-ui-Mhaeilfhina), O'Mulleeny's cross; Crossgar, short cross; Crusheen, little cross; Crossfarnoge, the cross of the alder tree, &c. At first these crosses were simple, and without ornament; but gradually they became highly ornamented and elaborated. They are connected not only with religious establishments, but were also raised, as Dr. Reeves has pointed out, wherever any providential visitation took place. Among varieties of the cross might be mentioned the inscribed slab marked with a cross, the perforated stone marked with a cross; the pillar stone marked with a cross; the earlier form of the Celtic cross, and the high cross with Celtic circle called *cross na screaptya*, or cross of the Scriptures. There are only five of these high crosses in Scotland and eight in England, but yet it has been pointed out that there are 300 localities in Scotland, 250 in England, and only 64 in Ireland where crosses are found. The Irish crosses are not only remarkable for the delicate beauty of their ornamentation, but also for the variety and boldness of the subjects depicted on their panels. They thus combined utility with beauty. For while

their graceful forms impressed the cultured, the *ignobile vulgus* stood awestruck before their representations of Scripture subjects and scenes in the lower world, the art-teaching of the Celtic Church.

The solitary romance connected with these buildings is that the supposed founder, Buite or Bœtius (Boice) McBronaigh, "the man of the fair band with the glories of clean deeds," had travelled far and wide, but returned to Ireland that "the place of his birth might be the place of his resurrection." He is said to have died on the same day that Columba was born.

The next place of interest which awaits us is Tara, better known, perhaps, through Moore's ballad than for its own departed glories.

CHAPTER XIII.

TARA'S HALLS.

SOME twelve miles from Slane, among a succession of gently-rising hillocks, is Teamhair, or Tara, meaning a ridge commanding a view. Such is the name of the locality, which has ever been associated with the glories and victories of the Irish race. There the King of Ireland held his court, and the princes and potentates, bards and druids of Erin, assembled every third year, since the days of Ollamh Fodhla, to deliberate, and discuss matters of government, education, and religion. The stronghold of Pagan darkness, its circular forts were destined to become the centre of Christian light, what time the eagle eye of Saint Patrick recognised its importance as the key of Ireland. From the smooth sward all traces of human habitation have been completely obliterated. But though the sods are silent as the grave, imagination might summon around us the "chiefs and ladies bright," and awake the echoes of the harp in Tara's halls. To re-animate the buried past, and fill it with moving figures, is at best an experiment. But many would like to form some conception of how that memorable day was spent that ended with the approach of the saint. For, although it has been

proved to demonstration that that part of Ireland which stood in close contact with the south-west of Britain was Christian previous to his coming, the tradition of Patrick has not yet been conclusively overthrown.*

In the early morn of the day two fires were kindled by the Druids, with great incantations, for the Irish were probably celebrating their Mayday, or Belltaine, festival at this time. In the halls of Tara there would be profuse hospitality for all comers, and the country round would present an interesting spectacle, enlivened by the moving figures of men and women, horsemen and charioteers, in gaily-coloured robes. Athletic games, pastimes, and even marriages would be celebrated on this occasion, which could not, however, coincide with Easter.

It is not too far-fetched an idea, and it is one that ancient records confirm, that horse-racing and chariot-driving were the principal amusements of this warlike people. The following might be a sketch of the day's proceedings:—

There is first a horse race, for which the youth of different tribes are entered. Off they start at the word, urging their steeds with their heavy lashes of plaited thongs and their long, sharp spurs, grasping their iron bridles in their hands. Bareback they ride. And now they are turning the course for the

*See, however, on this subject Heinrich Zimmer's *Celtic Church in Britain and Ireland.*

last time, and as they pass the pavilion where the King is seated the cheering rends the air. They have surrounded the winner, and are leading his horse back to his tent in triumph. To-night his name will be praised by the national bard. Now the young men are preparing for the foot race. They are removing their cloak pins, and taking off their brilliantly-coloured capes. And now they unwind the broad scarf from their waist, the heavy kilt is thrown aside, and in their light silk tunics and hosen they bound lightly into the course, their great, muscular arms and throats, tattooed with quaint designs, exposed to the admiring crowd. The word is given, and the competitors bound forth at full speed, now clearing an iron bar, breast high, with the greatest ease, and now gliding as rapidly beneath a two-foot rail. The race is keenly competed, and as keenly watched. It is over, and the victor is carried off by his friends in triumph. Now the great bell-mouthed trumpets blare, and the people crowd to the course to see the chariot race, for this is the great event of the day. Caesar gives a glowing description of the agility and strength of the British charioteers who fought against the Roman legions four hundred years before. It is, therefore, no stretch of imagination to suppose that these Irish charioteers, who had often encountered the Roman legions, were as skilful as their kinsmen in Britain, whose land they were wont to harry, when Cormac MacArt and Dathi were the terror of the

Continent of Europe. Now the chariots of bronze are driven upon the course one after another, and as each warrior appears, his name is loudly taken up by his friends and admirers, until the whole place rings again. The signal is given, and the teams rush madly forward from the post. The course narrows, and one of the drivers slackens, but the rest drive madly on. There is only room for one, but three dash into the gorge almost abreast. There is but a yard dividing the first from the second, while the third, lashing his steeds, forces the pace, and forging ahead, dashes his axle against the linch-pin of the preceding car, which falls out. Then the wheel rolls off, and the chariot is turned over on the ground, but the driver, nimbly bounding over his horses' heads, escapes destruction. Meanwhile, the audacious third gets clear, and passing the first, drives home amid the cheers and plaudits of the spectators. His name, too, will be sung by the national bard to-night among other heroes of the long-poled, heavily-driven chariots of bronze. Now the evening is drawing to a close, and the people return to their homes. The king and his guests once more seek the great hall, where the banquet is prepared. The chief Brehon is the Master of Ceremonies. The king and queen and the greater nobles are conducted within the principal fort to a raised dais, where they take their places at their table. And then the other chieftains and guests, who had stood up when the royalties were announced, were accommodated with

seats at the long table that ran down the centre of the hall. The feast begins, and sounds of merriment are heard. When this repast is over, the dishes are removed, and great bronze flagons of mead and beer are placed upon the tables. At a signal from the king, a henchman quickly rises, and leaves the hall, and presently returns, leading by the hand a gentle youth, who carries a harp upon his arm. This was the minstrel. Seating himself at the feet of the king, who smiled kindly upon him, he began to sing in a light tenor voice. Accompanying himself on his harp as he composed, he deftly weaves into his lay the names of the sturdy youths who have proved victorious in the games. Anon his music takes a loftier course, as he sings of the Spirit divine, who whispers in the air and breathes in the wind, whose voice is the murmur of the waterfall, and whose words are like the sound of many waters. The mists and clouds hide His Face when he is provoked by men, distant thunder is heard, and the storm breaks forth. Then men pray, and all is peace in the heart, for the anger of God is removed. So the bard sang on, and all sat breathless the while, when suddenly the door is thrown open, and the white-robed Druids, the priests, came in tumultuously. The cause of their coming is briefly related—"Yonder on the Hill of Slane is kindled a fire, and the royal law which forbids that any fire should be kindled before the royal fire at Tara be lit is broken by strangers." "What does it mean?" demands the

king. And the Druid answers: "It means that the fire which has been kindled before the royal fire will never be extinguished unless it be so this night. Moreover, it will conquer all the fires of our religion, and he who has lighted it will conquer us all, and will seduce all your subjects, and all kingdoms will fall before him, and he will fill all things, and will reign for ever and ever." In great wrath the king ordered his chariots to be prepared and taking his page, Eric, and his principal magicians, drives madly to the Hill of Slane, where the stranger had kindled his Easter fires. To pass over the marvellous details of that interview, let it be sufficient for us to know that the stranger, whether Palladius or Patricius was his name, made an impression upon the king and his followers, and that the name and power of Christ silenced and subdued the Druid priests.

Centuries later the scene of the principal festivities of Erin was swept away by some untoward disaster or rupture between the tribes. The popular legend is that Teamhair was cursed in the 6th century by the abbot Ruadhan because the Ardrigh refused to return a poor wretch who had been torn from the altar where he had sought sanctuary. Whatever may have been the cause of its fall, it is certain that its desertion led to the disintegration of the Gaelic nation. "Its tribes," as Moore has said, "can no longer be said to have had any common bond of union between them, any Pan Gaedalon, where they

could meet in harmony, and be reminded of their common origin." Tara was no longer used as a royal residence, or a centre of national life. The tribes naturally fell asunder, the Spirit of Erin passed away. Patriotism, in the larger and grander sense, died a violent death. And the land became the prey of any roving bands that chose to mix themselves up in the intestine feuds of the tribes.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ANCIENT CELTIC SETTLEMENT.

STARTING from Nenagh, the ancient *Aenach Urmhumhan*, the market-place of the tribes of East Munster for centuries, where an hospital for Augustinian Canons, Tyone, or St. John's House, dating from the 12th century, lies in ruins, and leaving behind us the lofty and massive circular donjon of the Butler's keep, a conspicuous object for miles round, still bearing marks of the great fire of 1688, when Long Antony Carrol, Sarsfield's officer, burnt it to cover his retreat, we come out on the Limerick Road. As we ride along we pass by on the left hand a splendid specimen of a rath, an ancient house, and an interesting watchtower, through which an ivy tree has burst its way, so that now a strange mixture of tree and tower on the verge of the glade bursts on our view. This find bids us halt and dismount. We first approach the house on the hill. As we draw near to it, we are astonished at its size. Although in ruins, we can infer from what remains, the massive stones of which it is built, the extent of ground it covers, and the thickness of the walls, that it must have been the house of some person of consequence.

As we walk along the field we come to the tree-tower we have just described. This was evidently a watch tower, being too small for anything more. There are many remains of such towers in the neighbourhood of Nenagh; but it is hard to say to what age they are to be assigned, if not to the days of the O'Carrol greatness; perhaps they are much more recent than we believe. But as we turn our steps down the field the antiquarian's appetite for the historic will be satisfied with the sight of two splendid raths, one encircled by a grove of tall fir trees, and the other consisting of a huge grassy mound. The country people regard these places as sacred, they will not touch a berry that is taken from one of them, much less move a sod therefrom. They also tell us that wherever we see one there is another within sight of it. This is, indeed, true in many places. For it was in this way that the ancient Irish laagered. Marking out a circular space of ground sufficient for their wants, if possible near running water, they dug a deep, wide fosse all round, and heaped up the earth they had taken from the circumference towards the centre where their chieftain pitched his tent. Within these entrenchments they were safe for the night from the attacks of their enemy, who could only hurl their missiles from a distance at a foe they feared at close quarters. Of course, if the occupation of the place was intended to be permanent, the earth-works would be on a larger scale—the mound or

mote* which we have just described being nearly thirty feet high—and the surrounding fosse would be filled with water. In some cases, as at Rathurles, the demesne of Colonel Brereton, a friend of the writer, there was a double circle of entrenchments, an inner and an outer, and water running through both channels. Such places were doubly secure. As sufficient has been said on this subject we may resume our journey, and make for Killaloe. As we ride along we skirt on the right hand a pleasant pastoral country, rising to a gentle but respectable height, while on the left, the sombre shadows of the Silvermines form a barrier that is broken now and then by gaps, and diversified here and there with shrubby hillocks and dales, until it gradually opens out into a pretty valley, at the bottom of which the rail runs now. This is Birdhill and, our road lying to the right, we are shut out for the nonce from the view of our picturesque surroundings, until we are brought face to face with the dark blue range of the Keeper. And so we travel up hill and down dale in the blithest fashion until we come out on the banks of the Shannon, and a charming landscape opens before us. Indeed we might say that from this point the country is unsurpassed in beauty. The river making a wide detour and throwing both its banks into the foreground, is spanned by an ancient

* The word *mote*, Irish *mota*, signifies a high conical mound. See Joyce, *Irish Names*, p. 290. Westropp Guide to Irish Antiquities (Science and Art Museum), Part V., p. 19. The word moat which may like it be connected with the French *motte*, hill, means dike.

bridge of many arches, crowned by the turreted steeple of its venerable cathedral, while a purple mountain range forming an impressive background, and the romantic groves and waters of Lough Derg stretching far away into the distance, add to the attractiveness of the picture.

Arriving at the village of Ballina, the ancient Bel-an-atha, or town on the ford, we cross the great stone bridge that leads us to the town over against us, which is no less than the historic Killaloe, one of the most ancient in Ireland, principally known now-a-days as the Paradise of Anglers. Some philologists tell us that the name of Killaloe signifies the Church of St. Lua or Molua, grandson of a Munster king with an unpronounceable name, who founded here an Abbey and a See in the sixth century. Kill-da-lua would then be the proper form of the word. Others, however, tell us that the meaning of the name is "the Church upon the waters." Whatever be the interpretation of its name, the place has been the residence of a Bishop since 639, when St. Flannan was consecrated. Another and later name, Claresford, the ford of Clare, given to it by Richard de Clare, who got possession of it in the 13th century, is preserved in the designation of the episcopal palace, within the beautiful grounds of which may be seen a fine specimen of an Irish cross, which, by the way, was brought from Kilfenora.

While here we may inspect the ancient cathedral, a

cruciform structure, with a heavy square tower in the centre, which is said to have been built by Donald, King of Limerick, in the middle of the 12th century. Parts of this building seem to belong to an earlier date. And the tradition that a church on this site was repaired by Brian Boroihme, the monarch of Ireland, seems to be verified, by appearances at least. In the nave is a highly ornamented Romanesque doorway, now walled up, thought by some to mark the tomb of Brian, but evidently leading into another and more ancient building, which has long disappeared. A curious old slab of stone is laid across the threshold of this door. The east window is very fine, consisting of three lancet windows, the central light being rounded at the head. To the north of the cathedral, and within the same enclosure, is a still more ancient edifice, now called the Oratory of St. Molua. This was evidently a church. The roof, highly-pitched and of stone—as the old damliaghs were—has been recently renovated. The door at the west end is rounded at the top, where it is narrower than at the base. Its deeply moulded arch-springs form two short columns, on the capitals of which are grotesque figures in which some see resemblances to an elephant and a baboon. In the gable is a corresponding window, rounded at the head, and narrowing towards the arch-spring. At the east end is a large opening with pointed Gothic arch, apparently the entrance to another building. Such is a brief and very inadequate

description of an ecclesiastical structure which should be seen to be admired. Taking a small boat—called in these waters a cott—we put out across the river, and land in a few minutes on what seems to be a great tangle of thickets, bramble, and brushwood, untrodden by the foot of man, and after fighting our way through this scrub we find ourselves in front of one of the earliest Christian buildings in Ireland—St. Lua's Cell, or the Church on the waters. This miniature chapel lies north and south, its doorway is about 5ft. 3in. high, is cut through a wall some four feet deep, and is narrower across the head, which is formed by one great slab of stone, than at the base, which is also a slab of stone. The entrance in the south wall of the tiny hermitage is cut in a similar fashion, without an arch. Within the little chapel there is a window, elaborately cut through the stone, four feet deep, a light set, as it were, in a four-fold frame of rock. The roof is also of stone, and pointed, rising some twenty feet high. It is much to be regretted that history has naught to tell us of the ancient worshippers in this small shrine, who doubtless did their share in an unostentatious way in spreading the light of Christianity among the unruly Septs of the West.

The archæological interest of the locality does not, however, end here, for below the bridge there is an ancient rath called Kincora, the headquarters of Brian Boroihme, or "Brian of the Tributes." Kincora represents the Irish words Ceann Coradh, or the head

of the weir, and the name tells us that there was in olden days a weir in the river to keep the water at a sufficient height for the fish, which brought in a large revenue to the King of Munster. To this fort, or dun, the great Brian used to return in triumph from his raids and forays into Leinster, and Munster, and Meath, driving before him across the ford the Borumha (Boro), or the tribute of cattle he had levied from his beaten foes, and which gave him his name Boroihme. From this ford, Ath-na-borumha, or the ford of the tribute, the little town opposite Killaloe is called Ballina, which means the town on the ford, Bel-an-atha. The Four Masters tell us of the erection of a caher or stone fort here among other works of this monarch. Planted in front of a great wood, and on the brow of a steep headland, washed on three sides of its base by the Shannon, and commanding the salmon weir, Kincora gradually grew so important that it attracted the notice of the Connaughtmen, who were led by the O'Conors again and again against the "palace" of the O'Briens, and ultimately with success, for we read that they destroyed the outworks, burnt the timber, threw the stones into the river, and ate the salmon. All that now remains of this residence of kings is a large circular mound, crowned with trees, and encircled by a dike almost filled up.

The sides of the high vallum slope gently towards the west, where there is an entrance and steps of large unquarried slabs of stone, which once formed

part of a great stairway leading within the enclosure. Here a soldier on guard could easily see any ship with the serpent prow and the raven standard gliding round the pretty point of the lake, and give the alarm to the garrison. Here admission was gained to the palace of the king, for which there was ample room in the large circular plot of ground, some thirty-five paces in diameter. It need not surprise us to find merely a few stray slabs of stone on the site of Brian's abode. For we are told that the dwellings of those days were made of wickerwork, with a covering of clay or earth, and had a white appearance. Such is all that we can tell of this impregnable fortress of the brave Brian, whose heart was stout to fight, and whose hand was strong to strike those terrible invaders, the Danes, the Vikings of the north. But fancy can fill the ramparts with the living forms of warriors, and the large hall of wood with the gleeman's song and the maiden's laugh. For those were gallant days, the days of tribal attachment, the days of daring courage in the chase, noble bravery in the battle, and gentle courtesy in the camp. There were tried knights then in Ireland, men who had taken the oath not to retreat before nine, not to take a dowry with a wife, not to betray a friend, refuse a civility to a stranger, or offer violence to a wayfarer. These were the Fenia or Militia of the king, his personal attendants in peace, his vanguard in battle. For many a time, when the

white sails of the Landleapers gleamed in the sun, did the battle grow dark on the blue waves of Lough Derg. Then the sons of Erin were convened, like the meeting of many waters, by the striking of the spear on the bossy shield, the shrill-sounding signal of war. Then the glittering brand of Brian was unsheathed, and lightened through the gloom of battle, and the invaders melted away before his fierce onset. Not seldom in the silence of night, under cover of the darkness, the terrible Danes, with the fire of slaughter in their eyes, stole darkly upon the host like gathering wreaths of mist from the water's edge; and men were slain in their dreams, and the cry of the babe pinned by the spear to his mother's breast was mocked by the ruthless invader. Many a fresh tomb did the morning sun see on the heath, and the land dripping with gore, and the bards mourning for the dead. But for all that, the Dane was held back, and his city of Luimneach was taken by Brian and his men after Kincora had sunk to rise again from its ashes. So the light of glory passed from the halls under the old oak trees to the battlements and keeps of the "Barren land." Here no longer the chiefs dispense hospitality to the stranger at "The head of the weir," and bid them "Go see the great feast in the dun." No longer do the freemen of the Dalcassian tribe, the "death or glory boys" of the 10th century, whose motto was, "First in the field, and last to leave it," meet to elect their

chief in the forest glades; no longer do the young men assemble for battle or sport, or, after the chase in the woods of the lake, bring back the deer which their high-bounding dogs have followed to the feast in Kincora. The harps of the minstrels are no longer unstrung, and the voices of the maidens are no longer uplifted in praise of the brave, or in songs of the sweet long-ago in the echoing halls. The wassail no longer is raised from the festive board; for Kincora is no more. But a characteristic record of ancient splendours of Kincora is preserved in the Munster welcome, "Were mine the boire of the Dane, or the wine of Kincora, it would be poured for you." Mangan, a modern Irish poet, translated the ancient lamentation over the fall of the king and his mighty men, made by Brian's own bard MacLiag, in verses which suspire with the wistfulness and sympathy of the Celtic spirit.

"O where, Kincora! is Brian the Great?
And where is the beauty that once was thine?
O where are the princes and nobles that sate
At the feast in thy halls and drank the red wine?
Where, O Kincora?

They are gone, those heroes of royal birth,
Who plundered no churches and broke no trust;
'Tis weary for me to be living on earth,
When they, O Kincora, be low in the dust,
Low, O Kincora."

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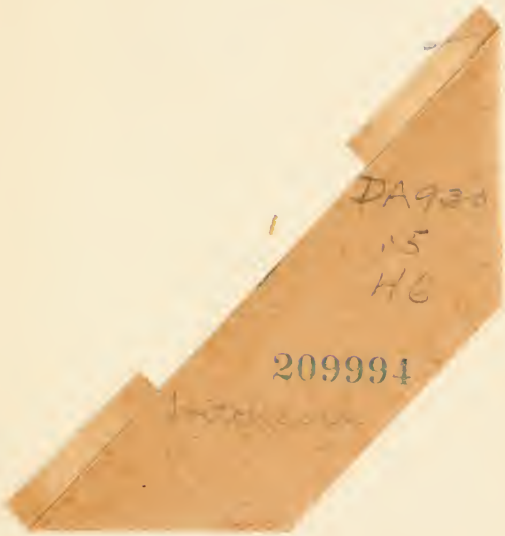
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